Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria

Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146–1260)

Daniella Talmon-Heller

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To my mother, Irena Talmon,
and in memory of my father, Jacob L. Talmon

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	*Annales Islamologiques*
BEO	*Bulletin d'études orientales*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and Asian Studies*
EI	*Encyclopedia of Islam*, first edition, Leiden 1913–1936
EI^{2}	*Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edition, Leiden 1960–2004
EQ	*Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān*
ER	*Ecyclopedia of Religion*
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*
ILS	*Islamic Law and Society*
IOS	*Israel Oriental Studies*
IS	*Islamic Studies*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asian Society*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
MSR	*Mamlūk Studies Review*
REI	*Révue des études islamiques*
RSO	*Revista degli studi orientali*
SI	*Studia Islamica*

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria is a study of a past Middle Eastern society—that of Bilād al-Shām—present-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and the West Bank, in the Zangid and Ayyūbid period.[1] The reconstruction of the religious beliefs and practices of members of that society, as undertaken in this book, entailed both the study of the works of its jurisconsults, preachers, and theologians, as well as an ethnography of its 'living faith'. In my imagination, I embarked upon a virtual voyage into the cities, provincial towns and villages of mid-twelfth to mid-thirteenth century Syria, for long spans of 'fieldwork', aspiring to attain some intimacy with the texture of medieval Muslim piety. Drawing on a large collection of works from the copious literary production of that society, a much smaller treasury of documents from its private and public archives, and the many remnants of the architectural and artistic output of its artisans, I chose to concentrate on the arenas that stood at the heart of religious life, and were attended by all: common men and women, members of the ruling military and administrative elites, scholars and religious functionaries, merchants and farmers. Their gatherings in mosques, attendance at popular assemblies of exhortation, visits to cemeteries, and pilgrimages to sacred shrines are the subject of the chapters of this book.

This specific scheme seeks to treat the religious life of all classes and groups simultaneously, and to capture the religious experiences, liturgical calendars, spiritual leadership and communal organization of the unlettered classes (*al-ʿāmma, al-ʿawāmm, al-nās*) in interaction with those of the educated elite (*al-khāṣṣa, al-khawāṣṣ*). It is an attempt to avoid the dichotomous model, the a priori positioning of the religion of the learned elite against the religion of the masses, and the construction of an official, normative, orthodox version of religion, opposed to a popular, heterodox, folk version. It focuses on hybrid religious orientations, and on the processes through which the

[1] For the sake of convenience, 'Syria' will be used as the name of the entire geographical unit throughout the book.

norms of religious life were negotiated among various groups, and were constructed and disseminated in society.

I have chosen to concentrate on the institutions that were open to all believers rather than on those designed primarily for 'professionals'. As is well known, in formal settings such as mosques, funerals and assemblies of exhortation, expressions of piety may be highly formalized, even routinized, and dependent upon communal gathering. But the same formal settings may also be the site of lone individual acts of devotion, sometimes highly informal and unstructured.[2] Needless to say, spontaneous outbursts of religious feeling, and expressions of love, praise (*ḥamd*), and submission to God, can take place in other settings as well. No separate chapters are devoted to the *madrasa* or the Ṣūfī *khānqāh* (though they appear many times in my work), despite the significance of those institutions in the religious life of the medieval Middle East. In Syria, the popularization of the *madrasa*, so eloquently presented by Jonathan Berkey, in the last chapter of his *Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*,[3] seems to have occurred, if at all, after the Mamlūk take-over. As to Ṣūfī lodges—*ribāṭ*s, *zāwiya*s and *khānqāh*s—there is little evidence of life within their walls, or of their influence on society at large, although our sources portray many individual Ṣūfīs and their interaction with other elements in society. The regrettable absence of chapters on religiosity at the marketplace and the private home is due to the dearth of relevant source material.

The first part of the book, following this introduction, concentrates on mosques in sixth/twelfth-seventh/thirteenth century Syria: the renowned pilgrimage centers of Jerusalem, the important congregational mosques and educational centers of Damascus and Aleppo, obscure neighborhood mosques, tiny oratories, and peripheral village mosques. It commences with a survey of mosques and their founders, an assessment of mosque attendance, and an analysis of the motivations of mosque builders and mosque goers. The makeup of congregations that assembled together in mosques, and the mechanisms by which these institutions were administered, are discussed at some length. The following sections deal with the manifold functions of mosques. Besides their obvious function as prayer-houses, mosques

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[2] Kinsley, "Devotion."
[3] Berkey, *Transmission*, 191.

served as educational institutions, social-political 'forums', refuges for the poor and homeless, seats of *qāḍī*s, podiums for the deliverance of official messages and the dissemination of information, meeting places for Ṣūfīs and scholars, retreats for ascetics, reliquariums and holy shrines. Some of those functions were contested, reflecting the ongoing tension between the aspiration to 'sanctify' the mosque and guard its purity on the one hand, and the dictum of the social and spiritual needs of society on the other hand. Moreover, both topically and geographically, the mosque was the site of debates over *sunna* (the proper, traditional way) versus *bidʿa* (unwarranted innovation), and negotiations over contested liturgical practices and questionable modes of behavior.

Chapter three is devoted to prayer leaders (*imām*s) and preachers of the mosque sermons (*khaṭīb*s). It attempts to draw their profiles and explore their relationships with their clients and patrons within various social settings. The contents, manners and methods of preaching, and the involvement of preachers and prayer leaders in current affairs and in the lives of congregations are investigated and interpreted in the historical context of the Crusading period, and Zangid and Ayyūbid rule.

Chapter four deals with the assembly of exhortation (*majlis al-waʿẓ*), which drew great and diverse audiences to mosques and other public spaces, weekly, or on special occasions. The descriptions of such assemblies in the medieval sources, and the few extant texts of exhortations, reveal the religious perceptions, political tensions, and expressions of piety of that age. They also illuminate the complex relationships between rulers, scholars, and the wider public. Contrary to prevalent images of popular preachers, *wuʿʿāẓ* in Ayyūbid Syria were respectable members of the religious elite, with close ties to rulers. The figure and career of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), the greatest Syrian preacher of the first decades of the thirteenth century, his discourse and his manner of exhortation are presented in detail.

Part two shifts to the arenas of the cemetery, mausoleum and shrine. Chapter five examines funerary rites, burial, commemoration, mourning, beliefs and customs associated with the visitation of graves, as well as the diverse scholarly debates over them. Drawing upon many anecdotes from the medieval sources, and upon insights provided by the vast scholarly literature, it sketches a nuanced portrait of the ties bonding the living and the dead. The careful study of the ceremonies that took place on the way to the cemetery and on its grounds renders

the means by which unity and social solidarity were constructed, but also exposes social tensions, deviations from conventional modes of behavior, and conflicts between religious ideals and social norms.

Chapter six seeks to explain the place of the mausoleum (*turba*) and commemorative shrine (*maqām, mashhad*) in medieval Syrian landscape and culture. It deals with the growing popularity of the visitation of sanctified graves—rediscovered ancient graves of Qur'ānic-biblical figures and of companions of the Prophet (*ṣaḥāba*), as well as newly dug graves of various shaykhs, scholars and martyrs, and sacred places. It surveys the geographical spread of shrines, the dynamics of the establishment and renovations of new shrines, and the emergence of the narratives supporting the specifically Islamic sanctity of sites that had formerly been (or, were simultaneously) identified with other religious traditions.

Part three is an endeavor to articulate the perceptions of piety, impiety and religious dissent, as understood by medieval Muslims of Syria. Chapter seven draws the ideal types of pious rulers, scholars and commoners, male and female, and highlights conflicting visions of perfect devotion to God in Zangid and Ayyūbid society. It also suggests that moderate Sufism and Ḥanbalī activism, two powerful trends at the time, had a profound influence on the perceptions and the practices of contemporaries. Chapter eight analyzes the vocabulary and discourse used in our sources to define impiety and dissent from established religious norms. It draws attention to a range of trends and phenomena that remained at the margins of the central arenas: the so-called *zindīq*s (heretics), antinomian Ṣūfīs and unruly ascetics, plebeian miracle-workers, astrologers, self-proclaimed prophets, certain theologians and philosophers. As their own voices are rarely heard, the perspective is, inevitably, that of mainstream scholars, reflecting their strategies of coping with challenging sources of authority and with deviation from established norms.

Appendix I is a tentative calendar of personal and public religious activity in twelfth-thirteenth century Syria: rituals conducted in daily, weekly and annual cycles, lifecycle rites and official state-celebrations.

Appendix II supplies maps and dynastic tables.

The index includes short definitions of the many Arabic terms used in this book, so it may serve as a basic glossary as well.

Historical Background

Around the middle of the sixth/twelfth century, for the first time since the fall of the Umayyads in 132/750, Damascus became once again the capital of a vast Muslim state, and retrieved its long-lost military importance and religious prestige. This new era in Syrian history followed the anarchy and chaos of the tenth and eleventh centuries, when Syria became a battleground for Fāṭimids, Seljuks, Byzantines, petty local urban forces and tribal groups.[4] Towards the end of 490/1097 the armies of the first Crusade arrived in the Middle East, and by 524/1130 a vast Christian kingdom had formed, stretching from Diyarbakr in the northeast, to the borders of Egypt in the south. The Syrian cities of the interior—Aleppo, Ḥamāh, Ḥimṣ, Baʿlabakk and Damascus—remained under Muslim rule. There, the Islamic counter-crusade, or *jihād* movement arose, accompanied by a series of campaigns for the unification of Syria into a single political entity. Nūr al-Dīn, the second son of the former Seljuk *atābeg* of Mosul Āq Sunqūr Zangī (r. 521/1127–541/1146), was its first major leader. Medieval Muslim historians eulogize Nūr al-Dīn not only for his devotion to his military mission and struggle against the infidels from without, but also for his exceptionally just rule, personal piety, and support for Islam within.[5]

Saladin, a freeborn Kurdish general in the army of Nūr al-Dīn Zangī acquired control over Fāṭimid Egypt in 565/1171 (when still in the service of his master) and subsequently consolidated his rule over most of Muslim Syria and the Jazīra. The Latin domains became the target of his ensuing military campaigns. During the 1180's he regained

[4] Hitti, *History*, 580; Ashtor, *Social and Economic*, 214–217; Lammens – [C.E. Bosworth], "Al-Shām," 265–267.

[5] Ibn Wāṣil's "best story about Nūr al-Dīn (*aḥsan mā yu'taththar ʿanhu*)" goes as follows: urged to divert funds set aside for Ṣūfīs and other men of religion in favor of war expenditures, Nūr al-Dīn declared angrily "I can't hope for victory save by means of them... How can I cut off the pensions of a folk who, while I am asleep in my bed, fight for me with arrows that never miss, and then turn around and spend their money on someone whose arrows are hit or miss?" (Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 1:136; trans. in Homerin, "Saving Muslim Souls," 62). The modern debate over the sincerity of his motivations as a fighter of *jihād* (duplicating a similarly unimportant, to my mind, debate over the sincerity of Saladin) has little to draw upon in contemporaneous literature. For a summary of his career, see Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 117–141.

almost all of the formerly Islamic territory; the Frankish cavalry was crushed at Ḥiṭṭīn and Jerusalem was triumphantly retrieved for Islam. By 584/1188 only Frankish Tyre, Tripoli and Antioch held out. Shortly thereafter, however, the forces of the Third Crusade, headed by Richard Lion-Heart, reestablished the Latin presence along the major part of the Syro-Palestinian coast, to pose a constant military and moral challenge to the princes of the Ayyūbid confederation.

Syrian unity was very short lived. Upon his death in 589/1193, Saladin bequeathed the empire he had painstakingly put together to seventeen of his sons, brothers and nephews, who had previously served him as army-generals and administrators. They all became princes in a confederation of autonomous principalities of varied size and importance. In subsequent generations, the cohesion of this confederation depended, to a large extent, on the authority of the reigning head of the clan, who was usually situated in Cairo. He was the only prince to formally carry the title 'sultan' (*sulṭān*). His other special prerogatives included the vow of alliance, the striking of coins in his name, and the mention of his name in Friday noon sermons throughout the Ayyūbid domains.[6] The rulers of other principalities usually used the title *malik* (pl. *mulūk*). Constantly shifting alliances, conflicting interests and a very mobile, mostly free-born and at least partially independent military elite undermined the confederation's stability.[7] Individual rulers occasionally pursued their interests by contracting with the Franks, the Khwarizmians, the Seljuks and the Mongols—against their siblings. But other forces worked to moderate inter-Ayyūbid conflicts, and end them, more often than not, in agreements and territorial adjustments. These included external threats, the interest in stability of the caliph in Baghdad and of local forces, intermarriage and familial solidarity. As for the relationship with the Franks, Saladin's heirs usually preferred peaceful co-existence and rehabilitation to continued crusades and *jihād*. The final overthrow of Frankish rule in Palestine was to come only at the end of the seventh/thirteenth century, at the hand of the Mamlūks.

Rebels from within the Ayyūbid army, and powerful enemies from without, put an end to the confederation. In 648/1250, in Cairo, Mamlūk conspirators murdered the son and heir of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb

[6] See Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 365–369.
[7] Humphreys, "Politics," 159, 164.

(r. in Egypt 637/1240–647/1249), the Ayyūbid sultan who had made *mamlūk*s, mostly of Kipchak-Turkish ancestry, the principal support of his rule. In Syria, the Ayyūbid lord of Aleppo al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II held on for another decade, until the Mongol invasion. At that stage (the end of 657/1259), the Ayyūbids were too divided and irresolute to put up a fight. Their kingdom was effectively incorporated into the Mamlūk Sultanate by Baybars,[8] and by 658/1260 only one principality, that of Ḥamāh in northern Syria, remained in the hands of an Ayyūbid prince.[9]

Notwithstanding the frequent inner friction, the ongoing confrontation with the Crusades, and the occasional clashes with the Khwarizmians, the Armenians, the rulers of Seljuk Rūm and local rebels—the Zangid and Ayyūbid periods brought recovery and economic expansion. All in all, it was a period of restoration, renewal and growth. Changes in the *iqṭāʿ* system[10] led to greater investment in agriculture, the reclamation of uncultivated land, and an increase in production. Ayyūbid sultans such as al-ʿĀdil and al-Kāmil minted *dirham*s on a large scale. Commercial relations with Italians and control over ports in Egypt and Yemen lent prosperity to Syria.[11] Towns grew and were provided with a legion of new caravansaries, markets, waterworks, fortifications and religious institutions, some of them in innovative architectural and artistic style.[12] Most of the medieval monuments that still adorn Damascus and Aleppo date from this period in its history.[13]

Stephen Humphreys points out several trends in the development of the Ayyūbid confederation. In the twelfth century the local Syrian elite was still influential in the administration, the religious establishment, and even in the army. In the course of the thirteenth century the army grew in size, and its political power increased at the expense of civilian forces. Freeborn men of the local population were pushed out of the military and the bureaucracy, but remained

[8] Abū al-Fidāʾ, *Memoirs*, 1–5.

[9] It was finally dissolved only in 742/1342.

[10] The assignment of land in return for military service.

[11] Ashtor, *Social and Economic*, 237–240; Cahen, "Ayyūbids," 800; Elisséeff, "Dimashḳ," 284; Khayat, "Šiʿite Rebellions," 174.

[12] Ettinghausen and Grabar, *Art and Architecture*, 310; Tabbaa, *The Transformation*, 3, 119–122; Heidemann, "Die Renaissance."

[13] Sauvaget, "Alep," 139; *ibid*., "Esquisse," 458; Khayat, "Šiʿite Rebellions," 174–175.

active in *jihād* propaganda, and as agents of Sunnī revivalism.[14] The *aḥdāth*—an urban militia or brotherhood of men who assumed the safeguarding of their city (often from the central government)—almost disappeared from the Syrian landscape in Zangid and Ayyūbid times. Claude Cahen surmises that their roles were divided up between professional emirs and *ʿulamāʾ*. The latter indeed held central roles in the Ayyūbid principalities, not only in the religious establishment, but also in the bureaucratic system and at the court. Several scholars, amongst them George Makdisi, Ira Lapidus and Joan Gilbert, noted the growth, empowerment and professionalization of *ʿulamāʾ* between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries.[15]

The 'sunnī reaction' that began with the Seljuk conquest of Syria was completed in Damascus, according to the estimation of Jean-Michel Mouton, by 549/1154. Persecution, culminating with the massacre of Ismāʿīlīs in 523/1129, and the loss of all prestigious political and religious offices to Sunnīs, promoted Shīʿīs to leave the city.[16] Yet, the Muslim populace of Syria, especially that of northern Syria at that time, must have included a sizable Imāmī and Ismāʿīli Shīʿī community, as well as Nuṣayrī and Druze groups. The Sunnīs were divided into adherents of the four schools of law, supporters of at least two opposing theological doctrines (with various shades of each), and a large and mobile immigrant population. The relations among the law schools were rather peaceful during most of the Zangid and Ayyūbid period. The occasional skirmishes and exchanges of insults between Ḥanafīs and Shāfiʿīs, or Shāfiʿīs and Ḥanbalīs, were a far cry from the violent *fitna*s that had disrupted life in the cities of Iran and Iraq from the tenth to the twelfth century. Moderate Ṣūfī asceticism and Ḥanbalī activism became powerful intellectual and social currents; they achieved acceptance and even respect from Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ*, and earned the patronage of rulers,[17] and were gradually incorporated into mainstream Islam. Sufism had a wide spectrum of expressions

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[14] Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 5–10. On the transformation of the army, see also Heidemann, "Arab Nomads," 298.

[15] Makdisi, "Sunnī Revival"; Lapidus, "Muslim Cities"; Gilbert, "Institutionalization."

[16] Mouton, *Damas*, 377.

[17] Nūr al-Dīn, for example, endowed three *khānqāh*s in Aleppo, in addition to six other such institutions (known also as *ribāṭ*s) that were established in Aleppo during his reign. More were built under the Ayyūbids, especially by Ḍayfa Khāṭūn in the 1230's (Tabbaa, *Constructions*, 164–182).

in twelfth-thirteenth century Syria. Alongside the great Ṣūfī theoreticians Ibn al-ʿArabī and Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī, we find *zuhhād*—pious men who combined mild asceticism with careers in the religious or political establishments, ascetics and mystics who retreated to special Ṣūfī institutions, secluded themselves in mosques, or chose a life of homeless wandering, groups of aspiring mystics huddled around their shaykh; and the radical *muwallah*s—'fools for God'—who totally rejected society and normative Islam.

Despite the foreign origins and military preoccupations of the Zangids and Ayyūbids, they were not only well integrated into local culture, but exerted a significant impact upon it. Whether constructed as a discourse of power and legitimization, or as a program of religious renewal, Nūr al-Dīn, Saladin, and their followers, raised the banner of *iḥyāʾ al-sunna* (the revivification of the *sunna*),[18] or *iẓhār al-dīn wa-imātat al-bidaʿ* (rendering the sunna victorious and killing-off innovations), sometimes phrased also as *nashr al-ʿilm wa-daḥḍ al-bidʿa* (propagating religious knowledge and refuting innovation).[19] At least some of them explicitly fostered a particular vision of Islam and Islamization. They extended massive patronage to religious institutions and scholars, selected in accordance with their personal preferences regarding school of law, theological orientation, or attitude towards the study of philosophy and the 'ancient sciences'.[20] This, in contrast to the Mamlūks who succeded them, and were also generous patrons of scholars and religious institutions, but seem to have done so primarily in order to attain peace, stability and greater institutionalization. The equal treatment of the four schools of law, implied by the nomination of four head *qāḍī*s by Baybars in 663/1265, and the erection of a growing number of *madrasa*s that taught all four schools of laws under one roof, reflect this later tendency.[21]

The relationship between the Ayyūbid court and the rest of society can be picturesquely imagined like that between the court-citadel (the *qalʿa*) and the city surrounding it. The court-citadel emerged in the Middle East in the late eleventh century, only several decades prior

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[18] For its beginnings in eleventh century Baghdad, see Makdisi, "Sunnī Revival." See also Berkey, *The Formation*, 189–202.

[19] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 166; *idem, al-Rawḍatayn*, 1:372, 377.

[20] As stated emphatically by Lapidus, regarding the religious policy of Saladin and his successors in Egypt (Lapidus, "Ayyūbid Religious Policy").

[21] Little, "Religion," 180–181; Winter, "Religious Life," 213.

to the arrival of the Ayyūbids on the scene, to become the locale of government, the residence of the ruler and the seat of military and political power. Earlier, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, court complexes were usually built away from urban centers, following the model of Samarra.[22] Although encompassed by walls, the Syrian court-citadel was organically tied to the city. Situated on a high spot, it could be seen from most parts of the city. It allowed the ruling class to separate itself from the bulk of the local population and protect itself from rebellions of city dwellers or military units, while maintaining interaction with the city and closely controlling it. A gate, which opened onto a wide thoroughfare leading to the congregational mosque and the major markets, usually connected the court-citadels to the city. Religious institutions situated within the citadel, mainly *madrasa*s and shrines, formed a second link between the court and the rest of the city. In Aleppo, for example, the *qalʿa* encompassed three renovated shrines, and a mosque with a lofty minaret. The ensemble transmitted a triple message: Islam's triumph over the Crusades, the religious commitment of the Ayyūbids, and the surveillance of the citadel over the city.[23] The dwellers of the citadel often descended from it into the city for a variety of worldly and religious purposes, and while most city-dwellers probably never entered the citadel, some officials, merchants, artisans, *ʿulamāʾ* and Ṣūfīs certainly did, making the *qalʿa* into a space of interaction between rulers and their subjects.[24]

Ayyūbid princes usually enjoyed a fine command of Arabic. Saladin was renowned as a zealous enthusiast of Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* recitation, who "made those of his sons who happened to be present [at the performance of a professional narrator] as well as the *mamlūk*s on duty, listen to the traditions he recited."[25] Some of the later Ayyūbid princes even nourished justified scholarly pretensions. Al-Malik al-

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[22] Bachrach, "The Court-Citadel," 207–208; *idem*, "Administrative Complexes," 111–128. Soon after Saladin consolidated his power in Egypt he undertook the building of the citadel located between Cairo and Fusṭāṭ, with a wall enclosing the whole urban area (Chamberlain, "Crusader era," 216).

[23] Tabbaa, "Circles of Power."

[24] Bachrach, "The Court-Citadel," 219–221. For example, Ṣūfīs put on a performance of *samāʿ* for Saladin at the citadel of Ḥamāh (Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Manhal*, 6:42).

[25] Bahāʾ al-Dīn compiled for him a collection of Qurʾānic verses and *ḥadīth* concerning *jihād*, which he frequently studied with his son, al-Malik al-Afḍal. He also recollects daily short readings of *ḥadīth* or *uṣūl al-fiqh* ("the four quarters of

Muʿaẓẓam (d. 624/12–27) is the prime example. Biographers extol his dedication to learning (and his humility), claiming that he would go by foot to the homes of his grammar and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) teachers, and carry with him on his travels and military campaigns a ten-volume compilation of Ḥanafī law, that he had ordered from one of his protégés. He composed a polemical treatise in defense of Abū Ḥanīfa (the founder of the school of law he had adopted in adulthood and promoted fervently), a work that gave him the credentials necessary in order to be considered one of the *ʿulamāʾ*.[26] Al-Malik al-Muḥsin Yamīn al-Dīn, one of the younger sons of Saladin, "dressed himself in the garb of *ahl al-ʿilm*," traveled to hear *ḥadīth*-scholars in far-a-way cities, and transmitted *ḥadīth* himself in the congregational mosque of Aleppo.[27] The historian and biographer al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) introduces al-Muʿaẓẓam's son, al-Nāṣir Dāwūd b. ʿĪsā of Karak, a man whose biography is replete with political feats, combats and changing fortunes, by formulas typical of the necrologies of *ʿulamāʾ*. Al-Ṣafadī begins the entry with a list of al-Nāṣir Dāwūd's teachers and the locales of his study, and ends it with a long poem (*qaṣīda*) praising al-Nāṣir's literary production. He also tells us that the prince was a collector of precious books, who was willing to spend thousands of *dīnār*s on rare and beautiful volumes.[28]

Most Zangid and Ayyūbid princes were not religious scholars, of course, but patrons of religious scholarship. They followed the pattern of the Seljuks and Būrids[29] in creating a symbiotic relationship with Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ*. They repressed the Shīʿa, founded a legion of religious institutions, endowed *waqf*s, and appointed the graduates of *madrasa*s to official positions, determining the balance of power between the schools of law. Saladin, according to the estimate of his secretaries ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī and al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, supported no less than 600 jusrist, with the overall annual expenditure of 200,000–300,000 *dinār*s.[30] Al-Manṣūr Muḥammad I b. al-Muẓaffar ʿUmar (r. 587/1191–617/1220–21) lord of Ḥamāh and neighboring

law") with Saladin (Ibn Shaddād, *Sīrat al-Sulṭān*, 77, 85; trans. in Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 28, 33).

[26] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:208–218; Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 189.

[27] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 3:1258–59. See also Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 49.

[28] Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 13:480–488.

[29] Mouton, *Damas*, 252, 359.

[30] Lev, *Charity*, 15.

towns, is said to have supported some 200 grammarians, jurists and other scholars.[31] In return, he earned the support of the *ʿulamāʾ*, cadres for the state administration, legitimacy, and a positive image of men truly committed towards the religious law, and respectful of the authority of *qāḍī*s (judges) and *muftī*s (jurisconsults).[32] So did other members of his dynasty. Official Ayyūbid epigraphy crowns its princes with three attributes: God-given military victory, royal justice, and religious learning.[33] The titles most commonly used for designating commitment to religion include *al-ʿĀlim* (the learned), *Nūr al-Dīn* (the light of religion), *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn* (the restorer of religion), *Rukn al-Islām wa-l-Muslimīn* (the support of Islam and Muslims). Some titles evoke struggle against dissenters and enemies from within: *qāmiʿ* (subjugator) *al-khawārij, qāhir al-mulḥidīn*, or *al-mutamarridīn* (subjugator of heretics or rebels), *qātil al-kafara* (fighter against infidels).[34] Nūr al-Dīn is quoted designating himself as a guardian recruited for the protection of the *sharīʿa* ("*naḥnu shiḥan lahā*").[35]

An unprecedented building boom marked Zangid and Ayyūbid rule. Fourteen *madrasa*s were established in Syria and the Jazīra under Nūr al-Dīn. In Damascus alone, 85 new *madrasa*s were established during the ninety years of Ayyūbid rule, more than under any other dynasty of the region.[36] Two new institutions—*dār al-ḥadīth* (college for the study of Prophetic lore) and *dār al-ʿadl* (the 'palace of justice', where the ruler redressed grievances submitted by his subjects)—were created.[37] Stephen Humphreys has documented 241 acts of construction sponsored by 174 different patrons in Damascus,

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[31] Abū'l-Fidāʾ, *The Memoirs*, 1. For rulers' commissioning specific works from *ʿulamāʾ*, see, for example, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:4; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 3:495; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 94; Elisséeff, "Un document," 138.

[32] See Gilbert, *ʿUlamāʾ*, 70–76, 221–222; Humphreys, "Politics," 166; Lapidus, *Ayyūbid Religious Policy*, 281. Of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II, one of the last Ayyūbid rulers, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī explicitly says: "*qad ḥakama al-bilād bi-qawānīn al-sharīʿa*—he ruled the country in accordance with the religious law" (*Mirʾāt*, 8:785).

[33] Humphreys, "Ayyūbids, Mamlūks," 9.

[34] Eddé, *Alep*, 201; Pahlitzsch, "Transformation," 62.

[35] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1: 363, 372, 377.

[36] On the establishment of *madrasa*s during those decades, see Elisséeff, "Les monuments"; Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 52; Gilbert, "Institutionalization"; Miura, "al-Ṣāliḥiyya," 139; Humphreys, "Politics," 151–169; Frenkel, "Political and Social."

[37] See Sezkin, "Dār al-Ḥadīth"; Rabbat, "Ideological Significance." Nūr al-Dīn founded the first *dār al-ḥadīth* in Damascus (and appointed Ibn ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAsākir (d. 571/1175–6) as supervisor), and the first *dār al-ʿadl* in that city (ca. 1163).

589/1193–658/1260.[38] No wonder that hundreds of posts became available for men of religious training. Many itinerant and emigrant teachers and students, amongst them refugees from al-Andalus, the Maghrib, and the eastern parts of the Muslim world, manned those posts.[39] They made Damascus, Aleppo, and some minor Syrian towns, into cosmopolitan Muslim intellectual centers.[40]

Sources

Nearly all Syrian chroniclers of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk period were *ʿulāmaʾ* (rather than statesmen or civil bureaucrats, court historians, or members of the military elite). They seem to have been motivated by a genuine personal interest in history, primarily that of their region, a sense of duty to record the eventful decades of the crusading era, and especially—to preserve the information about the lives and achievements of fellow Muslim scholars. Most chroniclers formulated, in one way or another, their conviction that the work they were producing had an edifying purpose; that history teaches values and morals, that it should serve in the instruction of rulers and promote the unity of the *umma*.[41]

The typical Syrian chronicle of the thirteenth century divides each year's records into two nearly even sections: *ḥawādith*—a presentation of the most important events, and *wafayāt*—concise obituaries of the noteworthy people who had died during that year, especially *ʿulamāʾ*. Biographical dictionaries supply some lengthier and more intimate portraits of men (and a few women) of that era, along with numerous rather disappointingly curt accounts. When chroniclers and biographers relate events of their own times, and biographies of people they had known personally, they do not hesitate to add personal remarks and insert autobiographical material. With the additional tales and anecdotes (*ḥikāyāt*), extraordinary facts (*muʿjibāt*),

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According to Rabbat, the institution was a specific product of the counter-crusade era, and disappeared by the middle of the fourteenth century.

[38] Humphreys, "Politics," 169–171.

[39] Already in the Fāṭimid period a substantial portion of the elite was non-native (Humphreys, "Towards a History," 12; *idem*, "Politics," 165).

[40] Gilbert, "Institutionalization," 105–135; Humphreys, "Politics," 164–165.

[41] Richards, "ʿImād al-Dīn," 143; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1:6–9; Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1:180.

and occasional critical remarks,[42] these works remain interesting and sometimes even entertaining till today. In order to avoid reproducing previous scholarship,[43] I will confine my review of the sources to a few short remarks on the chroniclers and authors of biographical dictionaries most significant for this book, before moving on to other relevant narrative and non-narrative sources.

The associative and eclectic chronicle of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-Zamān fī-Taʾrīkh al-Aʿyān*, unfortunately still in a poorly edited version, is rich with detail on life in Syria, to which Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī emigrated as an adult. He took great care to document his successful career as a popular preacher and intimate associate of some of the Ayyūbid princes, weaving accounts of his personal life into the narrative.[44] His contemporary, the Damascene Abū Shāma (d. 665/1267), considered as one of the best and most precise historians of his age, also allows us a glimpse of his personal life, beliefs and opinions, along with anecdotes and minor details about daily life in Damascus.[45] Another important work is *al-Nawādir al-Sulṭāniyya wa-l-Maḥāsin al-Yusūfiyya—The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, written by Bahāʾ al-Dīn ibn Shaddād (d. 632/1235), a scholar from Mosul. He was appointed by Saladin as *qāḍī al-ʿaskar* (military judge) in 584/1188, and remained in the sultan's service, maintaining a very close relationship with him until his death. This work not only provides an authoritative portrait of the sultan and his career (as a moralizing, even hagiographical work), it also presents a lucid vision of ideal piety, and some vivid details of religious life and education at the Ayyūbid court.[46] Another, later *ʿālim*, who presents first-hand knowledge of Ayyūbid history, especially of northern Syria, was Jamāl

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[42] See Dhahabī's criticism of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's inaccuracies (Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21:464); Subkī's condemnation of Dhahabī's prejudices (Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:22) and Ibn al-Shaddād's proclaimed receptiveness to comments and corrections (Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:13).

[43] Guo, "Historiographic Studies," 29–34; Khalidi, *Historical Thought*, 200–210, 56. On medieval Muslim historiography, see also Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 128–133, and Ahmad, "Some Notes," 82–83; Lev, *Saladin*, 1–43. For methods of reading medieval Arabic biographical dictionaries, see Hurvitz, "Biographies," 43–33; Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 188–192; Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 19; Ephrat, *Learned Society*, 12–15.

[44] ʿAbbās, "*Dirāsa*"; Guo, "Historiographical Studies," 16–18.

[45] See more in Pouzet, "Abū Shāma"; Lev, *Saladin*, 41–43; Hirschler, "Social Contexts," 323–327.

[46] See also Lev, *Saladin*, 33–35.

al-Dīn ibn Wāṣil (d. 667/1285) of Ḥamāh. He was closely related to the court, and served as diplomat, administrator, tutor and *qāḍī* under several Ayyūbid rulers.[47] His contemporary, ʿIzz al-Dīn ibn Shaddād (d. 684/1285) had also served in the Ayyūbid chanceries, until compelled to flee from the Mongols to Cairo.[48] Ibn Shaddād's *al-Aʿlāq al-Khaṭīra*, a comprehensive topography and history of Syria and the Jazīra, is particularly informative regarding religious architecture and the history of religious institutions. Together with sections dealing with urban topography in the earlier *Taʾrīkh al-Dimashq* of Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176) and in the later compilations of al-Nuʿaymī (d. 927/1521) and Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 953/1546),[49] it supplies data regarding the establishment of mosques, *madrasa*s, Ṣūfī homes and sacred shrines. While the lacunas in these lists are often frustrating, they do provide a fair amount of data information.

Kamāl al-Dīn ibn al-ʿAdīm (d. 660/1262), author of the rather concise chronicle *Zubdat al-Ḥalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab* and the voluminous biographical dictionary *Bughyat al-Ṭalab*, which also focuses on his beloved Aleppo (defined within very generous borders)—probably enjoyed an even closer acquaintance with local life and politics. He was born in Aleppo, to a renowned and wealthy family of religious scholars and functionaries, and spent his life there. His lengthy quotations from non-extant sources add historiographical value to his work, but for our purposes his rich presentation of individuals from among his contemporaries is even more valuable. Ibn al-ʿAdīm's intellectual curiosity is nicely illustrated in an anecdote concerning an investigation he conducted on an ancient inscription he had spotted in a *madrasa* in Damascus. He interrogated a *mudarris* who used to live there, and found out that it was a eulogy of Diocletianus, inscribed in Greek. He then searched for information about that last Roman emperor, and summarized it for his readers.[50] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, who liked to travel and to spend time in his family's summer resort in one of the villages

[47] El-Shayyal, "Ibn Wāṣil"; Hirschler, "Social Contexts," 317–323. See some personal memories of his and of his father's in Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:108–218.
[48] Sourdel, "Ibn Shaddād."
[49] Nuʿaymī, *al-Dāris*, Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*.
[50] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:458. For more on the author and his work, see Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 1–19; on his 52 (!) sources, see Eddé, "Sources arabes."

in Northern Syria, shares with us some observations regarding life in rural areas and popular pilgrimage sites.[51]

But it is Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī al-Ḥanbalī (569/1173–643/1245) who brings us as close as an *ʿālim* can get us to medieval Muslim villagers. His hagiographical dictionary *The Cited Tales of the Wondrous Doings of the Shaykhs of the Holy Land* was composed in Damascus. It is replete with quotations of relatives and neighbors who had emigrated from the villages of Mt. Nāblus to Damascus only several years prior to his birth. Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī himself is frequently quoted by later biographers, thus inadvertently adding to the 'over-representation' of Ḥanbalīs in our sources. Another compilation of biographical, or rather hagiographical sketches of people personally known to the author, was the work of Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī al-Manṣūr (d. 682/1283), a Ṣūfī from Alexandria, who spent several years in Damascus. His profiles of fellow Ṣūfīs he had met during a lifetime of wandering offers an exceptionally intimate glimpse of Ṣūfī life in the thirteenth century.[52] But all in all, historiographical sources provide a very partial, fragmented picture of religious life and attitudes.

From the huge literary output of the theologians, jurists, mystics, educators and professional admonishers of the Zangid and Ayyūbid period, I chose to consult a number of works. These include legal compositions representative of all four schools of law, *anti-bidaʿ* manuals, *ḥisba* treatises, devotional tracts, and collections of *fatwā*s. The latter genre seems to be especially promising as a source on socio-religious phenomena. True, the queries are usually posed in general terms (using the standard fictional 'Zayd' and 'ʿAmr', or simply 'a man', 'a woman'), thus distancing the discussion from the particular circumstances of the questioner. The answers are often laconic; devoid of reasoning and debate with other opinions and citations from earlier sources. But more often than not, seem realistic enough,[53] and even if some are not responses to concrete questions of real people, but rather, a didactic device used by the author in order

[51] For cases of historians interviewing villagers, see Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:473, 8:3852 and Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 128; Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 112 ff.

[52] For more details, see Gril's introduction to Ibn Abī al-Manṣūr.

[53] Masud *et al.*, "*Muftīs*," 22–23.

to clarify a hypothetical legal issue—*fatwā*s collections undoubtedly reflect something of the reality and mentality of their times.[54]

The main compilations used in this book include the collections of *fatwā*s of three prominent Shāfiʿīs: ʿIzz al-Dīn ibn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Sulamī (660/1262), Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245) and Abū Zakariyyāʾ al-Nawawī (d. 676/1276). ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī was an outstanding scholar: a *mujtahid* who did not hesitate to cross the boundaries of *madhhab*, a theologian who did not bend his Ashʿarī principles even when, in a certain constellation, they became unpopular, and a daring critic of rulers and moral laxity and lack of zeal for *jihād*. He was a *mudarris, qāḍī, khaṭīb* and *muftī*.[55] Al-Shahrazūrī is primarily regarded as a *ḥadīth* expert, being the author of a comprehensive work on all branches of the study of *ḥadīth* known as the *Muqaddima*. At the pinnacle of his career he was nominated to be the first headmaster of Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya.[56] Al-Nawawī, likewise reputable in his times and till this very day, also wrote about *ḥadīth*, but his more important work is on Shāfiʿī *fiqh*. Contemporaries describe all three jurisconsults as inclined to mild asceticism,[57] if not outright Sufism, an inclination evident in their *fatwās* as well. In al-Sulamī's collection, for example, supererogatory works (*nawāfil*) receive wide coverage. Besides his large scholarly compilations on *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*, he composed short devotional treatises, such as *Kitāb al-Adhkār* (a collection of invocations for all occasions), or *Maqāṣid al-Ṣalāt* (The Purports of Prayer) that were most likely written for ordinary believers and popular audiences. Al-Nawawī's *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn* (a collection of forty *ḥadīth* to memorize) may be seen in the same light. He is presented by Pouzet as a typical *ʿālim* of his age: "un esprit moins original que traditionnel, plus ascéte que 'mystique' de haut vol, moins créateur que vulgarisateur d'un acquis fidélement recueilli et conserve pieusement."[58] His biographers claim that he was totally devoted to his teaching and scholarship, and never married.[59]

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[54] See the short discussion about the value of legal and didactic material for the historian, in Berkey, "Tradition"; 30–42; Hallaq, "From *Fatwā*s," 32–38.

[55] See detailed biography in al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, introduction (by Kurdī); or short biography: Cheaumont, "al-Sulamī."

[56] Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 485."

[57] See Hurvitz, "Biographical Dictionaries," 50–65.

[58] Pouzet, *Damas*, 406.

[59] Al-Nuʿaymi, *Dāris*, 1:20–21, 25; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 7:618–621.

For the historian, *anti-bidaʿ* treatises and *ḥisba* manuals raise dilemmas similar to those raised by *fatwā*s, as certain lively descriptions that the naive reader might easily consider as eye-witness evidence may be found almost verbatim, in considerably earlier works.[60] Moreover, these works are, by definition, prone to exaggeration and profuse rhetoric. Yet, Abū Shāma's *Kitāb al-Bāʿith ʿalā Inkār al-Bidaʿ wa-l-Ḥawādith* is a rather moderate example of this genre, compellingly embedded in the author's time and place. Abū Shāma lectures most passionately against customs that his contemporaries mistakenly take for pious acts—from minute details of the conventions of Qurʾān recitation, to the installation of innovative prayers in congregational mosques. *Ḥisba* manuals, intended for the instruction of *muḥtasib* (the supervisor of public morals, better known as 'market inspector') contain equally lively descriptions of disreputable practices. The conspicuous absence of the actual activities of *muḥtasib*s from contemporaneous chronicles and biographical dictionaries, however, again arouses the suspicion that much of the material is merely theoretical. Still, *Nihāyat al-Rutba fī Ṭalab al-Ḥisba* by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Shayzarī (d. 589/1193), the earliest guide for the *muḥtasib* known from the Muslim east (al-Shayzarī probably resided in Tiberias and Aleppo), seems to convey some interesting features of contemporary religious life.[61] So too does a lengthy certificate of appointment of a *muḥtasib*, preserved in a guidebook for the study of rhetoric: *al-Mathal al-Sāʾir* by Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿAthīr (d. 637/1239). Whether the document was indeed used at the time of Saladin for the appointment of a *muḥtasib*, or merely for the study of the rhetorical device of *iṭnāb* (exaggeration), I cannot but agree with Ignaz Goldziher that the text is well worth the attention of the social-historian.[62]

A travelogue, guides for pilgrims, personal memoirs and a book about the underworld are some other sources that contain interest-

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[60] For example: al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Ukhuwwa, 300 years apart, complain in almost identical passages that people flock to popular assemblies of exhortation for amusement, rather than for religious improvement. Both scold young preachers *wuʿʿāẓ* who try to impress women (al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 4:122–125; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 182).

[61] See al-Shayzarī, *Nihāyat al-Rutba*, introduction (by al-ʿArini); Buckley, *Market*, 82 ff.

[62] Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:235; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal,* also in al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā*, 1987, 11:67–70. For information on Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, Ibn al-Athīr, see Cahen, "La correspondence."

ing representations of society and religion in twelfth century Syria. The *Riḥla* of Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217) is an intelligent personal account of a Maghribī traveler who spent some time in Syria in 580/1184, and observed with curiosity the habitat and the habits of its population. *Kitāb al-Ishārāt fi Maʿrifat al-Ziyārāt*, probably the first guide for pilgrimage in Bilād al-Shām, was composed by Abū Bakr ʿAlī al-Harawī (d. 611/1215), known to his contemporaries as 'the wandering ascetic' (*al-zāhid al-sāʾiḥ*). It is a most important source for the reconstruction of the sacred topography and sacred history of Bilād al-Shām, and of the debates concerning the sanctity of places. *Kitāb al-Ishārāt* stands out as a work singularly devoted to pilgrimage sites, but there are similar guides in large works such as Ibn al-ʿAdīm's *Bughyat al-Ṭalab* and Ibn Shaddād's *al-Aʿlāq al-Khaṭīra*.[63] A Jewish guide for pilgrims, *Elleh ha-Masaʿot*, also composed around the middle of the thirteenth century, offers some supplementary information on tombs of patriarchs and righteous men visited by the Muslim devout.

Two very different works that discuss medieval professions, their essence and their image, should be mentioned here as well, as they devote chapters to professions tied to the religious establishment. Subkī's *Muʿīd al-Niqam* is a short fourteenth century compendium on careers and occupations of sorts; Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Jawbarī's *al-Mukhtār fi Kashf al-Asrār* (composed between 619/1222 and 629/1232) is a humoristic lexicon of *fann al-nawāmīs*—the art of the sly and cunning who pretend to be men of religion, prophets, exorcists and fortunetellers.[64] Finally, there are several archival and epigraphic sources: some personal letters and documents such as *waqfiyyas* (acts of endowment) and *ḥajj*-certificates from the treasury of the Umayyad Mosque,[65] reproductions of documents in narrative and didactic works, inscriptions on monumental buildings and on epitaphs

[63] The first is entitled "*Bāb fī dhikr mā bi-Ḥalab wa-aʿmāliha min al-mazārāt wa-qubūr al-anbiyāʾ wa-l-awliyāʾ wa-l-mawāṭin al-sharīfa allātī bihā muẓann ijābat al-duʿāʾ*" (a chapter about the pilgrimage sites and graves of prophets and holy men and noble places where supplications are thought to be answered); the second: "*fī dhikr al-mazārāt allati fī bāṭin Ḥalab wa-ẓāhirihā*" (about the pilgrimage sites in and about Aleppo).

[64] Bosworth, *Medieval Islamic Underworld*, 106–118; Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 5.

[65] See Sourdel-Thomine et Sourdel, "Nouveaux documents"; *idem*, "Une collection"; *idem*, "A propos des documents." On the reasons for the meager survival of original documents and its implications, see Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 12–18.

in cemeteries,[66] and audience certificates (*samāʿāt*). The latter record, usually on the front page of the text, the names of the teachers and students attending a particular reading or lecture, its location and its date; information which may provide insights into the social aspects of the transmission of knowledge and the popularity and paths of dissemination of texts.[67]

Methodological Approach

My research assumes that major aspects of the life of medieval society, the religious aspect in particular, may indeed be retrieved and reconstructed from the texts which constitute the source material for this work. The data, however, must be processed with the aid of discourse analysis, in order to decipher the means of expression and representation, and take us beyond the simplistic collection of facts (or what seem to be facts). The integration of those two approaches—namely, the positivistic reconstruction of the ways through which twelfth-thirteenth century Muslims actively expressed their commitment to Islam, and the deciphering of the discourse by which piety and impiety were constructed in the literature produced by the members of that society—was one of the challenges of this work.

As the main thrust of the book is to deepen our understanding of the beliefs and practices reported by medieval authors within their specific time and place—the application of additional methodological tools was imperative. Some fine works on other historical societies provided me with models to aspire to. Peter Burke's essays in his programmatic *History and Social Theory* (1993) taught me the advantages of eclectic borrowing from the methodologies of social history and historical anthropology.[68] Aaron Gurevich's essay "Historical anthropology and the science of history" (1988) encourages to "ask an alien culture questions it did not ask itself," to apply new

[66] Available to the historian through collections such as *RCEA* vols. 9–12; Sharon, *Corpus*; Ory, *Cimetières*, and dispersed in a large number of topographical, archeological, historical and architectural studies of Syrian sites.

[67] See the large and annotated collection in Leder *et al.*, *Samāʿāt*; with a detailed explanation about those documents in the (quadrilingual) introduction.

[68] I feel particularly grateful to Peter Burke for his confession that if eclecticism "means no more than finding ideas in different places, then I am happy to confess to being an eclectic" (Burke, *History*, 165), and to my teacher, Beni Kedar, for his training in the craft of social history.

research methods to the study of known sources. He also calls to pay attention to the influence of the religious and cultural needs of the masses on the official religious, rather then "look mainly for the spread of cultural models from the top to wider sections of society."[69] I greatly benefited from Peter Brown's analyses of the dynamic and fluid nature of religious phenomena in late antiquity, and from Patrick Geary's studies of society and religion in early medieval Europe.[70] I found S.D. Goitein's imaginative treatment of social history in Jewish societies contemporaneous with 'my' Muslim society, and his observations on the surrounding Muslim world, particularly enlightening.[71] I was also influenced by insights of Giles Constable regarding preaching; by Elhanan Reiner's and Yoram Bilu's works on pilgrimage, and by Nisan Rubin's approach to death rites.[72]

Several book-length studies and numerous articles deal with the history of Syria in the Zangid and Ayyūbid period. I have often relied on Stephen Humphreys' wonderfully detailed *From Saladin to the Mongols* (1977), and on Louis Pouzet's *Damas au VII^{e}/XIII^{e} siècle* (1986): a thick and lively description of religious institutions and schools, scholarly families, the curriculum of religious studies, minority groups and everyday life. Chamberlain's *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus* (1994) challenged me with its daring reinterpretation of society and culture in the medieval Middle East. Works that place at the center of their inquiry the religious experience of the individual, rather than power relations, have inspired my approach more significantly, however. Consequently, I have devoted more attention to communal rites and their tacit meaning, functions and aims, and to theological concepts, than to social competition. Two works especially sensitive in this regard are *The Transmission of Knowledge in Late Medieval Cairo* (Princeton, 1992) by Jonathan Berkey, and Christopher Taylor's *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Leiden, 1998).

As is well known, medieval chroniclers, whose main fields of interest were political and dynastic history, do not readily volunteer

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[69] Gurevich, *Historical Anthropology*, 17–18.
[70] Brown, *Cult of Saints*; Geary, *Living with the Dead*.
[71] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*.
[72] Constable, "Language of Preaching"; Reiner, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage; idem*, "From Joshua to Jesus"; Bilu, "Jewish Moroccan"; Rubin, *End of Life*.

information about religious practices and beliefs, let alone those of men of humbler social classes, women and children, marginal groups and rural areas. Biographers were primarily interested in the *ʿulamāʾ* (even though rulers, emirs, merchants, Ṣūfīs and eccentrics do enter their works). Geographical treatises, chronicles and biographical dictionaries, travelogues, hagiographical works, *fatwā*s, anti-*bidaʿ* treatises, sermons, and other didactic manuals were all written by learned men, who did not necessarily understand the voices of commoners properly, even if they did take the trouble to listen to them and record them. Moreover, some of them wrote about commoners with the intent of reforming their practices, or doing away with them altogether. Yet, I agree with Jonathan Berkey's observation that in the medieval Middle East the lines separating one social group from another were porous, and that literacy was not a clear-cut mark of differentiation. There were varying degrees of literacy, and many, at least in urban centers, were exposed to some *maktab*-education.[73] *Mutatis mutandis*, Gurevich's reminder that "many genres of medieval didactic literature were written for the Church flock and that on both the form and content of this literature there remains the imprint of a kind of 'pressure' this audience imposed on learned authors"[74] is applicable to our case. All in all, my contention is that we can succeed in capturing some of the seemingly mute voices of medieval Muslim society in the sources we do possess, and attempt to explain their expressions of piety. The main strategies here are to cover as large and varied a corpus of literature possible, and avoid the construction of a separate category for popular religion—an issue I will return to.

The study of some topics should, perhaps, be given up altogether, at least until new sources or new methodologies become available. Our texts provide, for example, very little information about routine practices, such as daily prayers, weddings, or the celebrations of the two Islamic holidays. The modes of communal organization and the composition of religious congregations remain little known, even after close scrutiny of our sources. I have come to this conclusion after an obstinate struggle with my sources, in an attempt to identify the

[73] Berkey, "Popular Culture," 135.
[74] Gurevich, *Historical Anthropology*, 39.

social unit within which the 'average' individual worshipped his Lord, found spiritual satisfaction, and underwent the rites of the common liturgical calendar and those of his personal life cycle. My search was inspired by a challenge addressed by the distinguished art-historian Oleg Grabar to historians who work with texts. Having noted that the twelfth century marks the beginning of a significant change in the urban landscape of the Middle East and Iran—namely, the appearance of a large number of small mosques and oratories, mausoleums for holy men and women, *madrasa*s, *ribāṭ*s and monasteries of various types—Grabar suggests that those varying architectural forms had evolved to serve varying forms of emergent Muslim piety, and respond to the need of smaller social units.[75] He adds: "While to my knowledge there never occurred a parish-like organization in Islam, archeological evidence suggests that the alliance of the individual Muslim [in the twelfth century] was parochial, though it is not clear whether the parochialism was related to quarters, or whether certain city-wide organizations took precedence over topographical proximity. To interpret the evidence we need further textual investigation."[76]

Intuitively, I maintain the impression that religious life must have been carried out in more or less cohesive congregations, that is—bodies of people, who maintained face to face relationships, acknowledged the same traditional rules and shared a sense of solidarity.[77] Those may have evolved in urban quarters, or in the framework of the *madhhab*, or perhaps around neighborhood and village mosques. Despite scholarly interest in the urban quarter and in the Islamic school of law, and the relatedness of these institutions to the wider issues of communal organization and the autonomy of the public sphere in Islamic societies, questions pertaining to the social cohesion of both

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[75] Grabar, "The Architecture," 26–42.

[76] Grabar, "The Architecture," 38–39. Aaron Gurevich defines the medieval European Christian parish as "the most essential organizational form of social exchange...[the] local 'molecule' of the church...the parish tended to supplant all other human associations. The ideological and moral control of the population was accomplished within it; one belonged to one's parish from birth to death." (Gurevich, *Medieval Popular*, 78).

[77] There are dozens of definitions of 'community' (see Cohen, *Symbolic Construction*, 7–8). For our purposes, see Weckman, "Community"; Kitagawa, "Religious Communities"; idem, "Religion, Community."

institutions remain as yet unsolved.[78] Mosques seem to me as the institutions most likely to produce definable local congregations, but even though mosques are a major focus of research in this book, the evidence, as treated by my 'tool kit' at least, is insufficient to prove this assertion. Needless to say, it also cannot disprove the stance of Michael Chamberlain and D.S. Goitein regarding the question of communal organization in medieval Muslim society.

Chamberlain seriously doubts whether any organization existed at all. He describes Damascene society of the later Ayyūbid and early Mamlūk periods as almost devoid of group solidarities beyond those determined by familial ties and marriage alliances. He presents a realm of constant *fitna* and competition among the great *aʿyān* households (namely, the families of warrior and civilian dignitaries), concluding that there were few, if any, corporate groups.[79] Goitein, whose study of Egyptian Jewry in the tenth to fourteenth centuries has transformed our understanding of its organization, also fails to find group solidarities within what he labels as "the amorphous masses of Muslims." This, in contrast to the network of local closely knit semi-autonomous Jewish communities (*kahal* or *jamāʿa* in the languages of the Genizah) that were organized around synagogues, and gave the individual member the opportunity to be active in the life of the congregation and shoulder its collective obligations.[80]

As for culture, several models had been suggested, mainly by historians of medieval and early modern Europe, who attempted to study co-existent spheres of cultural production and consumption while avoiding the "two-tiered" model.[81] Boaz Shoshan, the author of *Popular culture in Medieval Cairo* (Cambridge 1993),[82] the first

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[78] On the urban quarter, see Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 85–95; *idem*, "Muslim Cities," 50, 59; Miura, "The Structure," 402. On social solidarity in *madhāhib*, and bibliography on this issue, see my "Fidelity and Cohesion."

[79] Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 58, 92–93. In my view, Chamberlain embraces here what Peter Burke calls "the conflictual model of society" (as opposed to "the consensual model"—see Burke, *History*, 28) too wholeheartedly. But see also Chamberlain's compelling presentation of the centrality of the household and of the significance of ties of patronage in his "The crusade era," 238–240.

[80] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:2–4.

[81] For a review of its genealogy, see Brown, *The Cult*, 13–18; for a discussion, see Davis, "Some tasks"; *idem*, "From 'Popular Religion,'"; Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, xiv–xvi; Shoshan, "High Culture," *idem, Popular Culture*, 6–7.

[82] A considerable part of Shoshan's book deals with popular religion. Significantly, it is made up of separate essays, which deal with the problems "temporarily and

book-length study on the cultural landscape of ordinary medieval Muslims, probed them all, concluding that the 'two-tiered model of cultural discourse', in the context of Islamic studies, cannot already be declared 'passé'. Furthermore, he finds it usefully "challenging the conventional and simplistic assumption that long before our contemporary 'mass culture' there has been just one monolithic (Islamic, in this case) culture to which rulers and peasants, scholars and illiterate folk alike belonged." Shoshan wishes to acknowledge that scholars had their own discourse, and that "the simple *zuwwār* [pilgrims]" were excluded from it, yet without ruling out "a multi-directional flow of culture."[83]

While I do not wish to argue against the notion that the Muslim religious elite (the *ʿulamāʾ*) had a discourse of their own, as implied by Shoshan's and Burke's approaches, nor for the notion that one monolithic culture embraced all—I would like to argue about the degree of the exclusion of commoners from the discourse of scholars on the one hand, and about the extent of their elimination from the practices of commoners on the other hand. The models suggested by Peter Burke (in 1978)[84] and Roger Chartier (1984) seem to me particularly interesting and applicative. Burke employs the terms coined by the anthropologist Robert Redfield, "great tradition, little tradition" to offer a model of an a-symmetrical relationship: while the great tradition is accessible only to the elite, the little tradition, oral and informal in nature, is accessible to all, and common to the different social groups. Hence the elite is, as it were, bilingual, possessing one additional language of its own.

Roger Chartier shifts the debate to the various strategies of appropriation and use of 'cultural products': texts and modes of behavior. He writes: "'Popular' religion is at the same time acculturated and acculturating, therefore...we must replace the study of cultural sets

arbitrarily" (*ibid*., 7), according to the conviction of the author that at this stage a fuller, book-length picture is impossible.

[83] Shoshan, review, 545. See also Berkey, "Popular Culture," 135–137, for a discussion of Shoshan's view, juxtaposed to those of Taylor and Karamustafa. Emil Homerin notes that most scholars of Islam in the Mamlūk period agree that the two-tiered model is inaccurate and misleading (Homerin, "Study of Islam," 29).

[84] Burke, *Popular Culture*, 24–28. Later, Burke came to the conclusion that the two-tiered model does not fall short of its alternatives, albeit with the awareness that boundaries shift, and that many intermediate situations exist (Burke, "Popular Culture").

that were considered socially pure, with another point of view that recognizes such cultural forms as mixtures…it implies identifying and distinguishing not cultural sets defined as 'popular', but rather the specific ways in which such cultural sets are appropriated…What is 'popular' is neither culture created for the people, nor culture uprooted; it is a kind of relation with cultural objects."[85] Chartier's model seems most promising for the analysis of phenomena such as Qurʾān recitation, *ziyāra*, and commitment to the *sharīʿa*. It calls for an effort to reveal the specific meaning that Muslims of different social categories attached to those practices, almost universally recognized as essential expressions of piety, neither 'high' nor 'popular'. This, exactly, is the intent of this work.

[85] Chartier, "Culture," 233–36. The more ambitious questions posed by Aron Gurevich regarding transformation as a result of dissemination, and the mechanism through which the masses acquire and assimilate ideas (see Gurevich, *Historical Anthropology*, 18–19) are highly intriguing, but it very hard to answer them on the basis of our source material.

PART ONE

MOSQUES

CHAPTER ONE

MOSQUES IN SOCIETY

From the break of dawn, when the first *Allāhu akbar* (God is the greatest) pierced the air announcing the new day, the call of the muezzin (*mu'adhdhin*) marked the flow of time in the medieval Muslim city. Its domineering presence echoes in the language of medieval Muslims, who indicated the times of public and private events in relation to prayers: a procession was held "at the noon call to prayer"; enemy forces penetrated a besieged city "between the two prayers," and a baby-boy was born "after the morning prayer."[1] The minarets of mosques could be seen above the skyline of all other buildings of the medieval Muslim town, proclaiming Islamic presence far and wide. Economical, social and political activity was concentrated in and around mosques. The authoritative indication of the peaceful continuity of rule was articulated by the mention of the sovereign's name during the Friday sermon, while its absence dramatically symbolized his overthrow.[2] The version of the call to prayer and the formula of the Friday sermon indicated whether Sunnīs or Shīʿīs controlled the place,[3] and if Sunnīs—which of the four Sunnī schools of law predominated there.[4] Important news—such as the abolition of taxes, the arrival of a famous scholar in town, terms of surrender to a conqueror—were read out loud in the mosque after the public

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[1] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 63, 75, 189; *idem, al-Rawḍatayn*, 2:308, 312; Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, 29.

[2] For a general discussion of this aspect of the sermon, see, for example, Von Grunebaum, *Islam*, 145–146. For Ayyūbid cases, see Cahen, "La chronique," 136; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:12; Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 273.

[3] The addition "*Ḥayya ʿalā khayr al-ʿamal*—come to the best of works" became a shibboleth of the Shīʿīs.

[4] The minor differences in formula (see Juynboll, "Adhān," 188) were a focus of power struggles between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs in Aleppo: in 462/1069 under the Mirdasid prince Maḥmūd ibn Naṣir ibn Ṣāliḥ; in 541/1146, when Nūr al-Dīn enforced the Sunnī *adhān*, and ten years later, during a Shīʿī rebellion (see Khayat, "Šiʿite Rebellions," 169–170, 178–191). Saladin compelled the Shīʿī *khaṭīb*s of Medina to pronounce the formulaic blessing of the *ṣaḥāba* according to Sunnī custom (Marmon, *Eunuchs*, 58, 139 n. 170).

prayer.[5] So was the decree of nomination of a new *qāḍī al-quḍāt* (head of the judges). *Qāḍī*s, *muḥtasib*s and *muftī*s held at least some of their sessions in fixed locations in mosques.[6]

Besides communal prayers of all sorts (daily prayers, Friday prayers and sermons, festive prayers)—assemblies for the recitation of Qurʾān, popular *ḥadīth* classes, assemblies of exhortation and scholarly study-circles were held in mosques. The prayer for the dead was recited in mosques, which served also as the point of departure for funerary processions, and the site of public mourning. The building often served as a refuge for the poor, and its nooks or minarets—as a retreat for the pious who wished to seclude themselves, yet not retreat to the wilderness. Holy relics and worldly valuables were safeguarded in mosques.

J. Pedersen, in his extensive entry on the mosque in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, asserts that "the history of the mosques in the early centuries of Islam shows an increase in its sanctity, which was intensified by the adoption of the traditions of the church and especially by the permeation of the cult of the saints." He seems to imply that the process—which entailed symbolic elements (such as the transfer of the epithet 'Bayt Allāh' from its original exclusive reference to the *kaʿba* to all mosques), as well as the harshening of regulations for approptiate conduct in the precincts of mosques—was completed by the end of the Ayyūbid period. He illustrates his point through a comparison between the conduct of the Prophet and that of the Mamlūk sultan Baybars: the former built a mosque on a place for tethering camels; the latter declined to do so, regarding it as unseemly.[7] Finally, Pedersen concedes that the mosque, despite the increase in its sanctity, remained a place of public assembly, visited for many purposes other than that of divine worship. This chapter unquestionably supports his view. Almost each and every Muslim in the society we are studying had reason to enter the mosque, and could find his place and purpose within it. Or, in al-Ghazzālī's words (albeit pronounced in a somewhat differ-

[5] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:11; Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl*, 308; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 203; Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 177–178.

[6] Over the objections of some scholars, who wished to safeguard the sanctity of the mosque (see p. 53, below).

[7] Pedersen, "Masjid," 654.

ent context)—“the mosque was unreservedly open to all (*wa-l-masjid muṭlaq li-jamīʿ al-nās*.)”[8]

The great mosques of Damascus and Jerusalem, the Umayyad Mosque and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, loom large in this chapter. Admittedly, the reason is primarily practical, as those mosques are mentioned in the sources much more often than other mosques. And even though their frequent mention in the sources is due, to some extent, to their special character as the fifth and third holiest mosques in Islam (a point which will be dealt with in the last section of this chapter)—I have worked under the assumption that, with certain reservations, they may be treated as representative of other, less prestigious congregational mosques. Mosques of that latter category, and neighborhood and village mosques will be presented here as well.

1.1. *The Spread of Mosques*

A thick network of mosques was spread throughout Syria in Ayyūbid times. Ibn ʿAsākir, who completed his great *History of Damascus* on the eve of Saladin’s ascent to power in Egypt and Syria, lists by name almost 430 mosques in Damascus and its suburbs, 109 *imām*s and 64 muezzins.[9] Ibn Shaddād, who composed his historical-geographical survey of Syria some one hundred years later, lists 660 Damascene mosques, 499 of them intra-muros. In the great mosque of Damascus alone, there were, in his days, nine *imām*s representing all four schools of law.[10] In Zangid intra-muros Aleppo there were 190 mosques; under Ayyūbid rule their number reached 204 or 208. Ibn Shaddād lists hundreds of mosques in greater Aleppo.[11] Those figures remain impressive (and even plausible) if we take into account that many of those mosques must have been tiny oratories located, perhaps, in private homes, or else prayer niches in large mosques,

[8] Al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 1:183.

[9] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:288–321. Smaller mosques did not employ permanent *imām*s and muezzins. Not all mosques were supported by pious endowments, and some lost them with the passage of time (see Lev, *Charity*, 74–75).

[10] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq—Dimashq*, 92–166. For an inventory of mosques built or renovated in Damascus during the Ayyūbid period, see Korn, *Ayyūbidische Architektur*, 99–169.

[11] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:181–228; Elisséeff, *Nūr al-Dīn*, 852. For an inventory of mosques built or renovated in Aleppo in the Ayyūbid period, see Korn, *Ayyūbidische Architektur*, 215–258.

counted as full-fledged separate mosques.[12] Buildings intended primarily for a different function (such as palaces, caravansaries, citadels, *ribāṭ*s, and *madrasa*s), are probably included as well.[13] Smaller towns were also adorned by a number of mosques. On the eve of its total destruction by the Mongols, the middle-sized town of Bālis, estimated to have had 5000 inhabitants, many of them non-Muslims, boasted of a congregational mosque (*jāmiʿ*) and two smaller mosques. The congregational mosque had a newly added minaret, decorated with a typically Shīʿī message, and one of the smaller mosques was embellished and almost doubled in size in the course of repairs that took place between 629/1230 and 649/1250.[14] Even a provincial town like Nāblus had two mosques.[15]

Especially striking, in my mind, is the large number of rural mosques one stumbles upon in the course of sporadic search in the relevant literary, epigraphic and archeological sources. There were mosques in the villages of Palestine as early as the tenth century. Al-Muqaddasī mentions those of Ludd (Lydda), "a great mosque there wherein large numbers of people assemble from the capital, and from the villages around," Kafar Sābā (on the main road to Damascus), ʿAqīr, "a large village with a fine mosque...on the main road to Mecca," a "beautiful mosque" in Yubnā, and mosques in ʿAmwās and in Kafar Sallām (one of the villages of Caesarea). Altogether, al-Muqaddasī mentions eighteen mosques in Palestine. His near contemporary, al-Iṣṭakhrī, lists twenty.[16] In the twelfth century there were at least seven mosques on Mt. Nāblus,[17] two of which—the mosques of the villages of Jammāʿīl

[12] See example in al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 1:197.

[13] Eddé, *Alep*, 435; Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 23.

[14] Mulder, "Contextualizing," 76–77.

[15] Literary sources mention al-Masjid al-Maghribī and another mosque, built in the proximity of the town where the prophet Adam had prayed (Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 94a; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 138; Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq: Lubnān*, 278.)

[16] Muaqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 176; trans. in Collins, *The Best*, 148; al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik*, 58. See list and map, in Levi-Rubin, "The Conquest," 7–74.

[17] Inscriptions attest to the construction of a mosque in the village of ʿAjūl (south of Nāblus) in 592/1196, and to the existence of a mosque in the village of ʿArūrā. Anecdotes about the shaykhs of Mt. Nāblus inadvertently mention mosques. The textual evidence about an *imām* (prayer-leader) in Sinjīl, the large Frankish fortified village of Castellum Sancti Egidii, twenty km. south of Nāblus, in the first half of the thirteenth century, combines nicely with the archaeological evidence of the conversion of its Frankish church into a mosque, to attest to the quick resettlement of the Frankish village by Muslims after its conquest by Saladin in 1187. That is,

and Salamiyya—hosted villagers from neighboring settlements for the weekly Friday communal prayers and sermon.[18] The mosque of al-Bīra (north of Jerusalem) was built after Saladin's conquest in 591/1195 by the emir Sārim al-Dīn Qaymaz al-Najamī.[19] The mosque of the village of Farkha (in the same region) was renovated by funds raised by local villagers "seeking God's approval (*min māl ahl al-qarya al-maʿrūfa bi-Farkha…ibtighāʾ riḍwān Allāh taʿālā*)" in 606/1210.[20] The twelfth-century Jewish traveler Rabbenu Yaʿakov mentions yet another mosque in a village north of Jerusalem (Rāma), and one in the Lower Galilee.[21] The Maghribī Muslim traveler Ibn Jubayr describes several mosques in villages of the Ghūṭa of Damascus. He notes especially the beauty of the great mosque of Bayt Lihyā, a former a church adorned with a colorful mosaic ceiling.[22] An inscription attests to the establishment of a mosque in the village of Zurʿa (Ezra), northwest of Buṣrā, in 651/1253, aside the well-known local church dedicated to St. George (the village still has a Christian population nowadays). The inscription mentions the names of the sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf [II] (r. 634/1236–659/1260) as the patron of the mosque.[23] Two other mosques in small localities of southern Syria—Sāla and al-ʿAyn, and one in nearby provincial town of Ṣalkhad were restored during the 1230's and 1240's.[24] The *salār* (Seljūq military rank) Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar b. Bakhtiyār constructed a mosque in the hamlet of Mayṭūr (in the vicinity of Damascus). The hamlet was later endowed by Fāṭima Khātūn bint al-Salār, most likely Ismāʿīl's daughter, in favor of a *madrasa* she had established on the eastern slope of Mt. Qāsyūn.[25]

Admittedly, the rural areas surveyed here, primarily those surrounding Damascus, Aleppo, Jerusalem, Baʿlabakk and Nāblus, were never really isolated from nearby towns and cities. Moreover, in the

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if indeed there had been no mixed Muslim-Latin villages in the area, as claims Ellenblum (see Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*, 103–109, 283).

[18] See Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Ḥikayāt*, 96b; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 146; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 26–27.

[19] Sharon, *Corpus*, 2:236; Korn, *Ayyūbidische Architektur*, 83.

[20] Sharon, *Corpus*, 3:189–190.

[21] Jacob the Messenger, *Elleh ha-Masaʿot*, 152, 156–157.

[22] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 277, 280–281. For another contemporaneous mosque in the Ghūṭa, see Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 48:67.

[23] Ory, *Cimetièrs*, 22–24.

[24] Ory, *Cimetièrs*, 43.

[25] Humphreys, "Women," 39.

medieval Middle East, as Lapidus has argued, the dichotomy between urban communities and their rural periphery was not clear-cut. There were settlements of farmers and herdsmen in close proximity to urban centers, while villages accommodated also a population that did not make a living from agriculture. Some institutions that are usually associated with towns, besides mosques, such as markets or Ṣūfī lodges, could be found also in villages.[26] In Muqaddasī's eloquent phrase referring to the large villages of Palestine, they were forms of settlement that "have not attained the influence of cities or their splendor, nor are they of the insignificance of villages in their obscurity, but rather wavering in degree, as it were, between the two."[27] Hence, until a thorough archeological survey of all medieval Syrian sites, including those in truly remote rural and desert areas is carried out, even the most meticulous investigation of the literary evidence cannot provide a full picture of the neighborhood mosques and rural mosques and their distribution in the region.[28] Still, the diffusion of mosques in those villages that do appear in narrative sources, incomplete as they may be, cannot but indicate the depth of the penetration of institutional Islam into Syrian society, and the inclusion of villagers within the Muslim *umma* in a manner that is definitely more than just formal.

Most urban mosques, and probably most rural mosques as well, were constructed thanks to the initiatives of rulers and other members of the ruling elite. Nūr al-Dīn's endowments may serve as a good initial example. After gaining control in Mosul, he constructed a congregational mosque, entrusting the supervision of the work to a local shaykh known for his piety, rather than for his administrative or architectural skills.[29] The building was adorned by an unusual inscription referring to the five pillars of Islam, possibly intended—in a predominately Christian town such as Mosul—for the edification

[26] Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 55–68; Bianquis, "Notables," 85–115; Havemann, "Rebels," 81–90. For rural mosques in various regions of the medieval Muslim world, see Johansen, "The All-Embracing Town," 160 n. 112.

[27] Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 176; trans. in Collins, *Best Divisions*, 148.

[28] For the results of some archeological surveys, see Ory, *Cimetières*; Rousset, "La mosquée de Raḥba." At this most-eastern post of Syria, on the Euphrates, a mosque was constructed at the beginning of the thirteenth century and enlarged some fifty years later. It resembled several Aleppan mosques, as well as those of Tripoli and Baʿlabakk.

[29] Lev, "Charity and Justice," 14.

of new converts. Nūr al-Dīn ordered that mosques be erected in the smaller towns of Darāyā, Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān (also predominantly Christian), Qalʿat Jaʿbar and al-Raqqa.[30] In Aleppo, he initiated the restoration of the very first mosque of the city, considered as having been erected by the Muslim conquerors on the spot where they had laid down their arms in 16/673.[31] It had been partly burnt down by the Ismāʿīlis in 564/1168–9. Nūr al-Dīn brought new pillars from other sites, and the damages were repaired, but he was dissatisfied with the results: the renewed mosque was asymmetrical. Realizing that the problem could be solved only by rebuilding the southern wall of the mosque at the expense of the space of the adjacent market (which happened to be part of the properties of the *waqf* that had sustained the congregational mosque) Nūr al-Dīn piously sought the permission of the *muftī* ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī to change the designation of the *waqf*.[32] Once he received the affirmative *fatwā*, so the sources tell us, Nūr al-Dīn completed the second phase of his reconstruction. The inscription he added onto the building mentions the Caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, thus forming a link between himself and that great righteous caliph and conqueror, who had declared, as it were, that mosques must be erected in place of every Christian church.[33] Nūr al-Dīn built two other mosques in Aleppo, a congregational mosque and a neighborhood mosque in Ḥamāh, and endowed, expanded or renovated nine mosques inside the walls of Damascus and five extra-muros mosques.[34] The extension of the great mosque at Ḥarrān was commissioned either by him, or by his son al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl (r. 569–577/1174–1181). It was adorned by elaborately carved columns, probably taken from the demolished cathedral of Edessa.[35]

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[30] Elisséeff, "Monuments," *idem, Nūr al-Dīn*, 775–779; Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1:383; Tabbaa, "Monuments," 229,235–237.

[31] For the interesting history of the mosque, see Ibn Shaddād, *Al-Aʿlāq*, 1:103–107. See also Tabbaa, "Monuments," 227–229.

[32] This impressive (exaggerated?) attentiveness to the letter of the law is attributed to Nūr al-Dīn in another context as well. Refusing to appropriate endowments designated for men of religion to arm his forces, Nūr al-Dīn supposedly said: "These men have a legal share (*naṣīb*) in the treasury, how could I give it to anyone else?!" (Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 1:136).

[33] Wheatly, *The Places*, 415 n. 140. According to Yāqūt, ʿUmar made that declaration in Bethlehem, but did not act upon it: he finally decided to spare the Nativity Church, and converted a local *khān* into a mosque (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 1:779).

[34] Antrim, "Ibn ʿAsākir's Representation," 122.

[35] Raby, "Nūr al-Dīn," 303–304.

Al-Ṣāliḥ also contributed to the erection of a mosque in the village of Buzāʿa in 567/1171, coming to the aid of local residents ("*bi-musāʿadat ahl al-balad*") who, most likely, were unable to shoulder all the costs on their own. He could still afford the construction of a congregational mosque in Tall Bāshir, northeast of Aleppo.[36]

After establishing his rule in Damascus, Saladin renovated three of its mosques. More importantly, perhaps, he converted or restored churches into mosques in cities that had been conquered from the Franks. Under his orders, a *minbar* (preacher's pulpit) and *miḥrab* (prayer niche) were abruptly designed for the Cathedral of the Sacred Cross in Acre in July 583/1187, in preparation for the "first Friday-noon prayer performed in the coastal plain since the day of defeat (*awwal jumʿa uqīmat fī al-Sāḥil baʿda yawm al-kasra*)."[37] Shortly afterwards, Saladin's emir Ḥusām al-Dīn b. Lajūn uncovered the *miḥrāb* of Mashhad Zakariyyāʾ, a sanctuary in the vicinity of Nāblus that had been used by the Franks as a church. The Frankish churches of Ramla, Hebron, Gaza and Tarsūs were also converted into mosques, as were the Frankish Cathedral of Tripoli and the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Beirut,[38] and the smaller churches of the villages of Ḥarastā and al-Mizza in the Ghūṭa of Damascus.[39] In all probability, such conversions entailed no more than the removal of the most disturbing Christian symbols and the addition of a *miḥrāb* and *minbar*.[40] During 543/1148–9, at a time of heightened tension between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs in Aleppo, one of those renewed mosques went through yet another 'conversion'. Nūr al-Dīn, in a series of steps taken in order to weaken the Shīʿīs of Aleppo, removed the building from the hands of the local Shīʿī community, and turned it into a Ḥanafī

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[36] Ibn Shaddād, *Description*, 65.

[37] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 2:201. The mosque (or *mashhad*) of ʿAyn al-Baqar, east of Acre, did not undergo such conversions—according to ʿAlī al-Harawī, the Franks refrained from turning it into a church thanks to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who threatened the Frankish guard placed there with destrucion (Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 44–45). Ibn Jubayr, who visited the mosque, reports that worshippers of all three religions prayed there (Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 303).

[38] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 374–375.

[39] These were turned into mosques by the vizier of al-Malik al-ʿĀdil, Ibn Shukr (d. 607/1210). Earlier, the Shīʿī *qāḍī* Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn al-Khashshāb (d. 519/1165) turned four of the six Aleppan churches into mosques in retaliation for a particularly cruel (but abortive) Frankish siege on the city, that took place in 518/1124–5 (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:62; Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq* 1:126, 140; Sauvaget, *Aleppo*, 127).

[40] Tabbaa, "Monuments," 225.

madrasa (Madrasat al-Ḥallāwiyya). In 545/1150–51 he expropriated another Shīʿī mosque to establish the Madrasa al-Shuʿaybiyya. At the same time, an anti-Shīʿī polemical message was inscribed on the adjacent Qastal al-Shuʿaybiyya.[41]

The climax of the re-appropriation of mosques was, of course, the removal of the golden cross that had been posed on the Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Ṣakhra) since its inauguration as the Frankish church of Templum Domini on July 15th 1149. This took place less than forty years later, on Rajab 583/1187. The greatness of that moment was recorded for the sake of posterity in the flowery rhymed prose of ʿImād al-Dīn al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 597/1201), in two inscriptions: one on the interior-side of the Dome of the Rock, and the other around the central *miḥrāb* of al-Masjid al-Aqṣā. It was also referred to in a title Ayyūbid rulers used to adorn themselves with for four generations to come: "Rescuer of Jerusalem from the hands of the infidels (*munqidh al-Bayt al-Maqdis min aydī al-kāfirīn*)."[42] The return of the Ḥaram to Muslim hands, and Saladin's project of renewing al-Aqṣā for communal-prayer and Friday-preaching (by the removal of crosses and images, the renewal of the *miḥrāb* and the washing and perfuming of the rock)[43] were completed with the transport of Nūr al-Dīn's *minbar* from Aleppo to Jerusalem. The *minbar* had been commissioned twenty years earlier from a celebrated Aleppan carpenter, who took about a year to build it. It was splendidly decorated with a long series of emotional invocations, conveying Nūr al-Dīn's ardent wish to conquer Jerusalem and set it there with his own hands.[44] In reporting the event, the historian ʿImād al-Dīn uses striking imagery, comparing the *minbar* (while it remained in the mosque of Aleppo—awaiting, as it were, its installation in Jerusalem by Saladin) to "a sword in its protective scabbard."[45]

Another *minbar* that was relocated following the victories of Saladin was the wooden pulpit that had been commissioned by the Fāṭimid vizier Badr al-Jamālī for the sanctuary of Ḥusayn's head in Ascalon

[41] Raby, "Nūr al-Dīn," 296–97. See also Khayat, "Šiʿite Rebellions."
[42] Korn, "Structure," 75–76.
[43] Korn, *Ayyūbidische Architektur*, 106.
[44] Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Fatḥ*, 60–69; Tabbaa, "Monuments," 233–235.
[45] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 2:157; Tabbaa, "Monuments," 233–235; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 151–161.

(ʿAsqalān) in 484/1092, upon orders from Caliph al-Mustanṣir.[46] Ascalon was razed to the ground by Saladin a hundred years later (in 587/1191), out of fear that he would be unable to hold it in view of Richard the Lionheart's advances, and the *minbar* was transferred to the reconquered mosque of al-Khalīl in Hebron.[47] Its installation in Hebron was a perfect way to communicate Saladin's double triumph: over the Fāṭimids and over the Franks. He had also planned to found a mosque to the south of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which, in symmetry with the *khānqāh* on the northern side of the church, would express Islam's predominance over Christianity in Jerusalem. The mosque, named after Caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and marking the site of his first prayer in Jerusalem (i.e. the first Islamic prayer in the holy city), was erected only after his death, in 589/1193.[48]

The ceremonies held at the conclusion of the renovations of the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, undertaken by Saladin's brother and principal heir al-Malik al-ʿĀdil, were probably less dramatic, but also solemn. In a conscious attempt to maximize the public impact of the event, the governor of Damascus was summoned to the site to lay down the last paving stone himself. Determined to complete the project in a truly triumphant tone, al-Malik al-ʿĀdil issued a new regulation. He ordered that the alleys leading to the great mosque be barred with iron chains every Friday, so as to put an end to a nuisance complained about by many Damascenes attending the noon prayers—piles of horse dung around the mosque.[49] In no time, the sultan got the publicity he had wanted, though perhaps not exactly as he had wished. An obviously ungrateful panegyrist composed a few witty rhymes, which resonated in all the markets of Damascus, something like: "Lo, here come new times, here comes a joyous day! The city is bound in iron chains, imprisoned every Friday, as if she was a stranger, a runaway, who may elope with the gates."[50] Undeterred, al-Malik al-ʿĀdil went on to establish the great mosque of the *muṣallā*, south of the city wall. For that project, he earned

[46] Sharon, "al-Khalīl," 4:958, based on Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-Jalīl*, 56.

[47] Under Frankish rule, the Ḥaram of Hebron was converted into a church (see Pringle, *Churches*, 225; Le Strange, *Palestine*, 327.

[48] Pahlitzsch, "Transformation," 51–52; Korn, "Structure," 77–78. Another mosque was installed at that time in the Chapel of the Ascension on the Mt. of Olives.

[49] Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 148–149.

[50] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 82. For other 'poems' announcing latest events, see *idem*, 64, 131–132.

the praise of the Damascene poet Ibn al-Nabīh (d. 619/1222), who attributed a symbolic meaning to the construction of the minaret of the mosque, in the context of the struggle with the Christian enemy. He writes: "Through him [al-ʿĀdil] God has destroyed the Cross and its followers. Through him the minaret of the community of Islam is lifted."[51]

Al-ʿĀdil's son, al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam, added a minaret to the mosque of Yūnus (Jonah), supposedly built by the emir Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī al-Qāsim al-Hakkārī (d. 615/1218–19) upon the prophet's tomb in Ḥalḥūl (in the vicinity of Hebron), at a time when the region was threatened with restoration to the Franks.[52] Seven out of fourteen building projects conducted by al-Muʿaẓẓam's brother, al-Malik al-Ashraf Mūsā (r. 626/1229–634/1237) in Damascus and its surroundings were mosques—three of them great mosques. Significantly, one of those mosques replaced a *khān* (caravansary), a place notorious for drinking and prostitution.[53] In the northern Ayyūbid domains, al-Malik al-Ẓāhir added a minaret to the great mosque of Ladhaqiyya in 607/1211; four years later, he ordered the construction of the citadel mosque of Aleppo, with its lofty minaret overlooking the city and reaffirming, as it were, the role of the Ayyūbids as guardians of the faith. Al-Malik al-Afḍal constructed a mosque in extra-muros Mayyāfāriqīn.[54] Al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf II, the last Ayyūbid ruler of unified Syria (648/1251–659/1260), was involved in numerous works of construction and restoration. Seven inscriptions that attest to some of his building and renovation projects were engraved on mosques in Aleppo, Aʿzāz, Adhriʿāt, Zurʿa, Jabla and Damascus.[55]

We will end here this rather lengthy, though by no means exhaustive list of sultanic endowments for mosques, in order to review some similar endeavors by men and women of lower rank. Here, the Ḥanbalīs stand out as a group possessing the initiative and the

[51] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 306

[52] Tamari, "Nabī Yūnus," 394–96. See Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 183–184; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 108.

[53] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq—Dimashq*, 87–88; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 5:143; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:714; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:147; Korn, *Ayyūbidische Architektur*, 143. For the construction and restoration of mosques by al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam and al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb in Jerusalem, Muʾta, Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān and Damascus, see *ibid*., notes.

[54] Tabbaa, *Constructions*, 60; *RCEA* 10:47, 51.

[55] Ory, *Cimetièrs*, 22–24; Korn, *Ayyūbidische Architektur*, 2:168, 259. For more mosques in northern Syria, see *ibid*., 2:259–281.

manpower to construct mosques for its members without relying on the benevolence of rulers. They also had the historians, either of their own ranks, or merely sympathetic to their group, who wrote detailed accounts of their accomplishments, as we shall see in the following paragraphs.

In 530/1135–36, Shaykh al-Ḥanābila ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shīrāzī (d. 536/1141) had planned to establish the first Ḥanbalī *madrasa* in Damascus.[56] Shāfiʿī adversaries went to Zumurrudh Khātūn (mother of the local ruler Shams al-Mulūk al-Būrī) and warned her that trouble was to be expected, since the majority of the townspeople were Shāfiʿīs ("*hādhā al-balad ʿāmmatuhu shāfiʿīyya, wa-tuthīru al-fitan*"). ʿAbd al-Wahhāb was ordered to stop the work. He did so obediently, but in the darkness of night he brought the construction workers and his people (*aṣḥābahu*) back to the site. Hurriedly, they erected a prayer niche. To the men who came down from the citadel to interrogate him on the next morning, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb said: "I have built a house for the Lord, and erected a prayer niche for the Muslims (*qad banaytu baytan min buyūt Allāh taʿālā, wa-naṣabtu miḥraban li-l-muslimīn*)." Nobody dismantled it.[57]

Two decades later, Ḥanbalī emigrants from Mt. Nāblus followed suit. Their enterprise is known to us in detail thanks to the historian Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (569/1173–643/1245), whose parents had emigrated from the village of Jammāʿīl to Damascus a few years before his birth. He recorded their story, supplementing it with evidence he collected from other members of the group. According to their memoirs, during the summer of 555/1160 (almost three years after the group's arrival in Damascus), the emigrants were eager to leave their dwellings on the precincts of the Mosque of Abū Ṣāliḥ, near the eastern gate of the walled city, where they had been guests of the older Ḥanbalī community in town. Shaykh Aḥmad, the head of the emigrants, visited the place that was to become their new abode: Mount Qāsyūn, on the outskirts of Damascus. Having been shown the site of 'the ancient mosque (*al-masjid al-ʿatīq*)' on the slope of

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[56] The first Syrian Shaykh al-Ḥanābila was ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's father, ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Shīrāzī, the propagator of the Ḥanbalī school in Syria in the middle of the fifth/eleventh century (Mouton, "Reliques," 336).

[57] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 1:238. It came to be known as the Sharīfiyya.

the mountain,[58] Shaykh Aḥmad went down to the river, performed the ritual ablutions, and returned to lay several stones on what had allegedly been the place of the ancient *qibla* (wall or niche pointing towards Mecca). He prayed and blessed the place. Only then did he call on his people to begin construction on the site. Working in consort—the men building, the women baking bread and preparing food together[59]—they put up their own mosque and their own homes.[60] Anecdotes about the measures taken by the first settlers against robbers, wolves, lions and Bedouin slave-dealers indicate that the mountain was very sparsely populated at that time,[61] but the new mosque was to become the center of a flourishing suburb (al-Ṣāliḥiyya) with bustling mosques, *madrasa*s, Ṣūfī lodges and commemorative shrines.[62] Already in 598/1201–1202, the Ḥanbalīs of Mt. Qāsyūn undertook the establishment of a Friday Mosque. They were able to complete this ambitious project, however, only after the governor of Damascus and the ruler of Irbil had both established *waqf*s to help finance the works.[63]

In Manbij, the otherwise anonymous shaykhs Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf b. ʿAlī and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Aghā erected a minaret in 581/1185. The *ḥājj* Fuḍayl b. Yūsuf b. Zaydān constructed a mosque in Buṣrā in 614/1217–18, while another *ḥājj* of the same locality, ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī b. Hunayd, took upon himself works in an older mosque.[64] Both men may have been in a particularly pious mood under the influence of their pilgrimage to Mecca, and sought to express their invigorated faith by the performance of good works for the benefit of the community of the faithful. Members of the influential and well-to-do Banū al-ʿAdīm Aleppan family erected a mosque in their

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[58] Perhaps the site of the prayer of the companions of the Prophet, Kaʿb al-Aḥbār and Makḥūl, alluded to in a tradition that Ibn ʿAsākir quotes (and criticizes!) (see Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:330–331); or else of the prophets Ilyās, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, ʿĪsā and Ayyūb, in accordance with traditions in praise of Mt. Qāsyūn (Kister, "Sanctity," 26).

[59] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Aḥwāl*, 121a.

[60] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 37. For a detailed description, see Talmon-Heller and Kedar, "Muslim Survivors".

[61] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 42–44, 83–84.

[62] See Toru Miura, "al-Ṣāliḥiyya."

[63] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 29; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:510; *RCEA*, 9:241–244, 10: 90. The mosque became known by several names: Jāmiʿ al-Jabal, Jamiʿ Abī ʿUmar, Jāmiʿ al-Ḥanābila and Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī (Humphreys, "Women," 54 n. 59).

[64] *RCEA*, 9:144, 10:142, 183. Another small mosque was constructed in Buṣrā in 655/1257 (*ibid*., 12:16).

own alley.[65] Three Damascene artisans who were known as ascetics (*zuhhād*) and righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*)—the carpenter Abū al-Thanāʾ al-Ḥawrānī (d. 642/1227), the handy man al-ʿAfīf b. Abī al-Fawāris (d. 662/1263), and Muḥammad al-Sabtī (d. 626/1229)—are said to have built small mosques with their own hands.[66] A woman was the patron of another Damascene mosque, built in the last decade of the twelfth century. The widow of the physician Asʿad b. Miṭrān al-Muwaffaq (who was a manumitted female-slave of the sultan) constructed a mosque, which included the mausoleum of her late husband.[67] In Jerusalem, after ninety years of Frankish rule during which Muslims were absent from the city, there was barely an indigenous population capable of sponsoring building activities. Yet, Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr in the center of Jerusalem was founded by an individual named Muḥammad al-Muḥārib (no rank or title mentioned) in 595/1199.[68]

The Turkish emir ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak (d. 645 or 647/1247 or 1249), who was the *muqtāʿ* (assigned lord) of the town of Ṣalkhad in Ḥawrān, renovated mosques in two small nearby settlements. In 630/1233 he ordered that his endowments—the revenue of ten shops intended for the renovation of the portico, the minaret and the floors—be recorded on the minaret of the local congregational mosque.[69] An inscription placed at the entrance to a neighborhood mosque in Aleppo indicates that "the servant ʿAlī b. Ḥaydar, yearning for God's pardon for himself and for his parents," constructed the mosque in 606/1209. A similar inscription, adding a specific and quite unusual dedication to Ḥanafīs, indicates that another neighborhood mosque was established by one Ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Sharafī.[70] Following the destructive Mongol conquest of Aleppo, a member of a local secretarial family (his name is not given) dedicated 18,000 *dīnār*s to the restoration of the great mosque, and an additional sum of 2,000 *dīnār*s for the purchase of mats and prayer beads.[71]

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[65] Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 42, 94.

[66] They must have financed the reconstruction works in the great mosque and in another mosque beyond the city walls with *waqf* money (Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 136, 157; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 6:2908).

[67] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:412.

[68] Korn, "Structure," 82, 85.

[69] Ory, *Cimetiéres*, 40–48. He must have been a great builder: four caravansaries and three *madrasa*s are also attributed to him.

[70] *RCEA*, 10:40, 156; see also 9:33.

[71] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:117.

Ibn ʿAsākir's list, mentioned in the previous section, contains the names of dozens of otherwise unknown men and women who constructed and renovated mosques. We may assume that most of these mosques were small and simple edifices converted into chapels using minimal means. While it is impossible to ascertain whether the agnomen (*laqab*) *al-bazzār* or *al-sāʾiq* actually indicate a shop-keeper or driver, and not the great grandson of one, the abundance of agnomens associated with artisanry and manual labor—undertaker (*ḥaffār*), sesame-oil merchant (*shirāji*), butcher (*qaṣṣāb*), camel dealer, "a Christian who roasts meat in the market, who became a sincere convert to Islam,"—as well as titles of men of arms (*amīr, ʿamīd, shiḥna, al-ḥājib, rajul jundī*)[72]—seems to indicate that the social base of mosque patronage was rather wide. Ibn ʿAsākir him-self concludes his list with a similar appraisal: "the multitude [of mosques] testifies to the dedication of the people [of Damascus] to religion, and to the large number of those who pray and wor-ship the Lord." The geographer Zakariyyāʾ b. Yaḥyā al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283), who visited Damascus in his youth, seems to have had the same impression. Writing about the great Umayyad mosque, he notes that a significant part of its huge income (1,200 *dīnār*s daily, six times the sum necessary for its routine maintenance, according to information he himself provides), comes "from the people, amongst them artisans—*min al-nās, minhum ṣunnāʿ*".[73]

At this stage, a conclusion and a speculation are in order: the first regarding the availability of mosques, the latter regarding communal organization around mosques, perhaps even beyond them. It is safe to conclude, that thanks to the massive construction and reconstruction of mosques throughout the Zangid and Ayyūbid periods, hundreds of mosques dotted the landscape of Bilād al-Shām in the thirteenth century. Mosques located outside city-centers—in suburbs, in peripheral towns and in villages—facilitated massive mosque going, and lent the land an unmistakably Muslim ambiance.[74] The notable upsurge in mosque construction may be accounted for by the economic prosperity of the period, and by the general confidence of the public in its rulers and

[72] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:288–321.

[73] Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, 191.

[74] For a fine analysis of the Islamization of the cultural landscape of Palestine, see Luz, "Aspects of Islamization,"133–154, and Tamari, "Arabization and Islam-ization."

in their ability to maintain proper order, abide by Islamic norms and protect *waqf* endowments.[75] The demographic growth of the Muslim community (the result of natural growth, emigration and conversion to Islam), urban sprawl,[76] and the establishment of new settlements obviously called for more houses of worship. The widening of the social base of architectural patronage enabled it.

Stephen Humphreys, attempting to interpret the invigorated architectural activity in Damascus during the first half of the thirteenth century, first attributed it to the renewed presence of the Ayyūbid princely court in Damascus, assuming the very central role of the court in building activities. Later, Humphreys modified his explanation, including, as a major factor, the surprisingly large contribution of immigrants—emirs, *ʿulamāʾ* and beaurocrats—to the architectural efflorescence of Ayyūbid Damascus. These newcomers, motivated to tie their fortunes with the city, apparently were a central catalyst in the building boom.[77]

It is possible, however, that the multiplicity of mosques and the widespread establishment of new religious institutions, characteristic of the period we are dealing with, had been instigated by socio-religious factors—such as Islamization and the deepening of religious commitment. Yet another possible explanation is the rise of conflicting religious trends and the fragmentation of communities into congregations that wished to disconnect themselves and acquire a distinct identity. Syrian Muslims were indeed a heterogeneous lot in the twelfth–thirteenth centuries. The Sunnīs were divided into partisans of four schools of law, at least two opposing theological doctrines, with various shades of each, and some of them identified with Ṣūfī groups and *futuwwa* fraternities (associations of "chivalruos men"). The Shīʿīs were split into diverse sects, incorporating—according to Ibn Jubayr—Rāfiḍīs, Imāmīs, Zaydīs, Ismāʿīlīs, Ghurabīs ("who say that ʿAlī more resembled the Prophet than a raven does a raven"), and other sects "impossible to enumerate."[78] Syria hosted, or absorbed, a large and mobile immigrant population, originating in the western and eastern ends of the Muslim world. If each of these groups preferred to pray separately,

[75] An observation made by Hoexter in "The Waqf," 134.
[76] On this phenomenon in Aleppo, see Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power*, 24.
[77] See Humphreys' "Politics."
[78] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 280; trans. in Broadhurst, *Travels*, 291. For the *futuwwa* fraternity known as al-Nabawiyya, see Eddé, *Alep*, 437.

and had the means to finance oratories of its own—that could account for the impressive variety of houses of worship surveyed above. This is a conjecture that cannot be ascertained by our souces. In truth, the only hint to such a state of affairs I came across is al-Sulamī's short discussion of the legitimacy of the construction of a second congregational mosque in a town, while its existing congregational mosque is large enough to accommodate for the Friday noon prayer. Al-Sulamī takes into consideration the motivation of the builder: if his intentions are pure (i.e. he aspires to come closer to God) and he does not intend to bring about schism between the devout (*tafrīq bayna al-mu'minīn*), then there is no fault in his action.[79]

1.2. *Communal Ties and the Administration of Mosques*

Michael Chamberlain describes Damascene society of the later Ayyūbid and early Mamlūk periods as one with hardly any group solidarities beyond those determined by familial ties and marriage alliances.[80] He may be right, yet I mean to question this assertion by searching for the common denominator uniting those who assembled for prayer in a particular neighborhood mosque. It could have been their sectarian or *madhhab* affiliation, or perhaps their native tongue, particular dialect, or descent from a certain village or clan. Otherwise, it may have been a shared admiration for a certain shaykh, a liking for an *imām*, or simply geographical proximity. The particularly high number of oratories and mosques in Aleppan quarters known to have accommodated people of several ethnic groups, such as al-Ḥāḍir (populated by Turks, Kurds, Bedouin, Iranians, and Iraqis), or al-Rābiya and Jawrat al-Jaffāl (populated by Kurds, Hawranis, Iranians, and Iraqis)—81 and 175, respectively[81]—seems to suggest that emigrants from different localities formed separate congregations.

Let us concentrate first on *madhhab* affiliation: collect whatever evidence there is on the ramifications of this affiliation in the arena of the mosque, and try to assess its significance for congregational organization. It is important to note, that prayer in a one-*madhhab*

[79] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 397.

[80] Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 58, 92–93.

[81] Eddé, *Alep*, 436; *idem*, "Origines," 40; *idem* 1998, 202, see also Gaube and Wirth, *Aleppo*, 98–103 (with a map, and slightly different figures).

congregation was not a matter of legal necessity, and prayer behind an *imām* affiliated with a *madhhab* other than one's own was perfectly valid. In the thirteeth century, the Friday congregational prayer in the great mosque of Damascus was led by a single *imām* (referred to as *imām al-jāmiʿ*, or *imām al-miḥrāb*), nominated by the head-*qāḍī*. He was usually affiliated with the school of law of the contemporaneous ruler.[82] The daily prayers in the great mosque, in contrast with the Friday noon-prayer, were performed in several separate enclosures and oratories, and led by *imām*s of all four schools of law.[83] This was not an unusual arrangement—by that time, many congregational mosques had a main *miḥrāb* in the *qibla* wall, usually assigned to the predominant rite or that favored by the ruler, and smaller prayer niches in the same wall or enclosures elsewhere—for the other rites.[84] At one point—following the commotion that ensued when a popular Ḥanbalī scholar, ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī (d. 600/1203), was accused of heretical doctrines and condemned to exile from Damascus—the separate prayer of the Ḥanbalīs in the congregational mosque of Damascus was abolished by the ruling authorities.[85] Seventeen years later, the Ḥanbalīs were again accorded the right of separate prayer in the great mosque. Moreover, they finally received a proper *miḥrāb*, instead of an area enclosed by bookcases, which they had earlier.[86] In 635/1238, the Ayyūbid ruler al-Malik al-Kāmil made another attempt to interfere with those arrangements. He ordered that the evening prayer (*ṣalāt al-maghrib*) in the congregational mosque be performed in a single congregation, "so as to avoid chaos and confusion (*tashwīsh*)." His regulations seem to have been disregarded shortly thereafter, however, and the multiplicity of *imām*s and praying congregations continued to characterize the congregational mosque of Damascus well into the Mamlūk period.[87]

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[82] Mouton, *Damas*, 362–365. The call to prayer was pronounced according to the custom of that same *madhhab*.

[83] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq—Dimashq*, 81. For the exact location of the *miḥrāb* of each school in early fourteenth century, see al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 1:195.

[84] Jarrar, "Sūq al-Maʿrifa," 92. In late twelfth-century Mecca, according to Ibn Jubayr, members of each of the schools of law prayed in a different part of the mosque, in the following order: Shāfiʿīs, Mālikīs, Ḥanafīs, and Ḥanbalīs (Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 101–02).

[85] See Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 46–47; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:22.

[86] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 105–106.

[87] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 166. See the description of the great mosque by al-ʿUmarī, in al-Munajjid, *Madīnat Dimashq*, 238.

Prayers in the mosques of al-Aqṣā and in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem were led by *imām*s of the two major schools of law, the Shāfiʿī and the Ḥanafī. Since Saladin's reconquest of Jerusalem (583/1187), Shāfiʿī predominance was established there by the repeated nomination of Shāfiʿī *khaṭīb*s and muezzins.[88] In those mosques, the devout must have been an exceptionally mixed crowd, as Jerusalem was a pilgrimage center that drew visitors from all ends of the Muslim world. Yet, we do not hear of Ḥanbalī and Mālikī *imām*s active at the Ḥaram. Those two smaller schools were affiliated, however, with adjacent institutions for prayer and study. The Mālikīs could benefit from Masjid al-Maghāriba and the Mālikī Madrasa al-Afḍaliyya, established by al-Malik al-Afḍal (r. 582–92/1186–96) on a large space outside the western walls of the Ḥaram.[89] The Ḥanbalīs were granted Sūq al-Maʿrifa, a hall located at the southwestern corner of the Ḥaram, thanks to an endowment by al-Malik al Muʿaẓẓam.[90]

In the legal sources, a statement such as that of the Baghdādī scholar (and vizier) Ibn Hubayra (d. 560/1165)—"to designate a mosque to adherents of a particular school of law is an evil innovation . . . It should not be said: those are the mosques of the partisans of Aḥmad [Ibn Ḥanbal], so the partisans of al-Shāfiʿī are barred from them, nor the other way around (*ikhtiṣāṣ al-masājid bi-baʿḍi arbāb al-madhhab bidʿa muḥditha, fa-lā yuqālu: hādhihi masājid aṣḥāb Aḥmad, fa-yumnaʿu minhā aṣḥāb al-Shāfiʿī, wa-lā bi-l-ʿaks*)[91]—may have been said in an effort to counter such a trend. In contrast with Ibn Hubayra, the Damascene Shāfiʿī scholar ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī stipulates that the endower of a mosque in a town with a predominant school of law should also support the nomination of a prayer leader affiliated with that same school.[92]

*Madrasa*s may have served as spaces for the separate prayer of adherents of different schools of law: until the Mamlūk era, *madrasa*s were usually affiliated with one school of law only, thereby accommodating mainly (though not exclusively) students and scholars of that

[88] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:211.
[89] Jarrar, "Sūq al-Maʿrifa," 73; Tibawi, *Pious Foundations*, 13–14.
[90] Jarrar, "Sūq al-Maʿrifa," 92.
[91] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 1:271–280. And see Makdisi, "Ibn Hubayra."
[92] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 445–446.

school.[93] Although outsiders seem to have joined the staff and students for daily prayers, prayer in *madrasa*s entailed the absence of students and scholars from the public prayer assembly in the municipal great mosque (*taqlīl al-jamāʿa*—detraction from the community), and was therefore somewhat controversial. In this context, Abū Shāma quotes Ibn Masʿūd, the companion of the Prophet, reprimanding a group of Qurʾān reciters (*qurrāʾ*) who had established a mosque for themselves, as having abandoned the people and neglected their duties towards them.[94] Still, daily prayers were held in *madrasa*s and in *khānqāh*s, and in the late sixth/thirteenth or early seventh/fourteenth century the Friday communal prayer and sermon were probably introduced to those institutions as well.[95] The act of endowment (*waqfiyya*) of the Madrasa al-Ṣalāḥiyya in Jerusalem, for example, stipulates that the professor and the students always pray 'on-campus'.[96] The *waqfiyya* of the al-ʿĀdiliyya al-Ṣughrā requires that the *madrasa* have a *mudarris, muʿīd, imām*, muezzin, gatekeeper and *qayyim* (supervisor) to serve its twenty students, and possibly also outsiders who came to pray in its precincts.[97] The historian Abū Shāma used to pray (and for some time also lead the prayer) at the Madrasa al-ʿĀdiliyya if the time of prayer occured while he was sitting in its library, issuing *fatwā*s.[98] In Aleppo, Ibn al-ʿAdīm dedicated an exquisite wooden *miḥrāb* to the Madrasa al-Ḥallāwiyya, where he held an appointment as professor of law. The *dār al-ḥadīth* founded by his contemporary, Ibn Shaddād, was designated "for reading the *ḥadīth*, and for its teaching, memorization, hearing and recitation; and for the performance of the five[!] prayers on Friday."[99] Other *waqfiyya*s of *madrasa*s provide for the salaries of the prayer leader and muezzin, and explicitly proclaim that any Muslim who wishes to participate in the public daily prayers should be welcome in the *madrasa*. We may assume that there was no discrimination on the basis of *madhhab* affiliation.

[93] For examples of Mālikīs teaching in the *madrasa*s of other schools, see Pouzet, "Maghrébins," 190.

[94] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 212.

[95] Berkey, *Transmission*, 54–55, 190–191; Pedersen, "Masjid," 350–367; Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 22; Little, "The Nature," 93; Mouton, *Damas*, 269.

[96] See Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 93–94. For early evidence on prayer in *madrasa*s, see also Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:304–307.

[97] Humphreys, "Women," 45. Sulaymān b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 620/1223) was, for a while, the *imām* of al-Madrasa al-Ṣāḥibiyya (Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 52:102).

[98] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 38, 54, 199, 189, 219; *idem, al-Bāʿith*, 223.

[99] Tabbaa, *Construction*, 43.

Evidence on *madhhab*-affiliated neighborhood mosques is very scarce. A mosque in Sūq al-Ghazzāl in Damascus was known to have been dominated by Shāfiʿīs, whose position there was contested (*kāna yuʿrafu bi-aṣḥāb al-Shāfiʿī fa-taghallabūʾ ʿalayhi wa-jārat fīhi munāzaʿa*)—it is unclear by whom.[100] As mentioned above, an inscription from Aleppo indicates that in 615/1218 a man named Ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Sharafī dedicated a mosque to Ḥanafīs (*ʿalā madhhab al-Imām Abī Ḥanīfa*) in that city.[101] *The madhhab*-affiliated neighborhood mosques that are well documented are Ḥanbalī mosques. Ḥanbalīs gathered for prayer in the mosque of Abū Ṣāliḥ in intra-muros Damascus, in the mosques of the Damascene suburb of Mt. Qāsyūn, in the congregational mosque of Ḥarrān, in an oratory known as Sūq al-Maʿrifa in Jerusalem, in the Western Mosque of Nāblus and in the mosques of the near-by villages of al-Sāwiyā and Jammāʿīl. On Fridays, men and women of some dozen different villages in Mt. Nāblus, amongst them the only Ḥanbalī of Yāsūf, used to flock to the mosque of Jammāʿīl, to pray and attend a sermon.[102] It seems to me that those Ḥanbalī communities kept together and prayed together thanks to their particular vision and practice of communal leadership. While neither Islamic law nor custom provide for a 'pastor' who takes charge of the liturgical, spiritual and organizational needs of a community all at once, Ḥanbalī shaykhs fulfilled all those tasks for their adherents, thus forming and keeping together cohesive groups of the type that we searched for in the previous section.

What about the administration of other, non-Ḥanbalī mosques? Early legal literature regards the inhabitants of a quarter as a collective that shares a mosque and the rights and resposibilities of its management. Al-Shaybānī (in the second/eighth century) and al-Sarakhsī (in the fifth/eleventh century) confer the responsibility for the maintenance of the building, the administration of its affairs and the appointment of its functionaries on that collective.[103] In light of the principle that "in the neighborhood-mosque the local residents have the rights (*al-ḥaqq fī masjid al-maḥalla li-ahlihā*)"—which seems somewhat contrary to the well-established notion regarding the absence of corporations

[100] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:301.
[101] *RCEA*, 10:156.
[102] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 63:133–135; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:222, 171; Jarrar, "Sūq al-Maʿrifa," 73; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 2:475, 1:28; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:269–271.
[103] Johansen, "The All-Embracing Town," 151.

of any kind in Islamic law or in Islamic cities[104]—al-Sarakhsī stipulates that the "people of the mosque" (*ahl al-masjid*) are entitled to nominate their muezzin and *imām*, regulate the opening and closing of the doors of the mosque, dig a well or a cistern in its courtyard, erect gates, hang lamps, provide for shade, lay mats and make repairs. Al-Sarakhsī's contemporary, al-Māwardī, uses the term *al-masājid al-ʿāmmiyya* to denote neighborhood mosques, and he too speaks of the people of those mosques as responsible for the maintenance of the building, and for nominating an *imām*.[105]

*Fatwā*s issued in Damascus in the thirteenth century, however, confer those responsibilities on the supervisor of the *waqf*, the *nāẓir*. Al-Nawawī, asked whether a salaried-*imām* is entitled to his full wages if partly absent, refers the decision to the *nāẓir*. Likewise, ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī asserts that any payment to an *imām* must be subjected to the *nāẓir*'s consent. According to another decree of al-Nawawī the *imām* needs the permission of the *nāẓir* if he wishes to make special use of the surplus donations to his mosque (funding a pilgrimage to Mecca, in this particular case). In a third *fatwā*, al-Nawawī deals with a *nāẓir* who transferred money from the endowments of one mosque to that of another.[106] What emerges from this short survey of legal responsa is that the administration of mosques was actually handled by an appointed official—the *nāẓir*, rather than by the congregation (or its representatives). This is clearly formulated as a directive by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 727/1328), who claims that no one but the legally appointed supervisor has the right to manage mosque-endowments, and that he alone is authorized to make administrative and financial decisions.[107] The complimentary routine maintenance of the edifice of the mosque was assigned to the *qayyim* (or *qawwām*), a salaried functionary whose work was supposed to be supervised by the local *muḥtasib*.[108] All this evidence put together points to the absence of congregational organization for purposes other than the routine functions of the mosque, with the notable exception of the Ḥanbalī milieu.

[104] Stern, "The Constitution," 49–50. See also Hoexter, "The Waqf," 123: "rights accrued to only two categories: the individual and the *umma*."
[105] Al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūṭ*, 1:136, 27:13–24; al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām*, 86–89.
[106] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 94–95; al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 238.
[107] Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 48.
[108] Shayzarī, *Nihāyat al-Rutba*, 106; Buckley, *The Book*, 128, 201.

Still, the historical sources show that under special circumstances the public associated with a certain mosque would act in concert in order to protect or advance its particular interests. In Aleppo, a *mutawallī* was obliged to open his account book and defend himself before the city's governor as a result of the pressure of a congregation that complained that he had squandered the endowments of their mosque on an unnecessary new water system. The *mutawallī* claimed that the money spent was actually the present of an anonymous philanthropist, and not part of the regular endowments.[109] In another case, during Ramaḍān of 528/1134, an angry crowd protested the discharge of the *imām* Ismāʿīl b. Faḍāʾil al-Badlīsī (d. 535/1141) from the congregational mosque of Damascus, after thirty years of service, because of "his leaning towards *tashbīh* (anthropomorphism)."[110] Unfortunately, there are no further details about the circumstances of al-Badlīsī's discharge, nor about his enemies. But we hear of later Damascene congregations that demanded from their *imām*s that they hold the controversial prayer of *al-raghāʾib* contrary to the better judgment of scholars, and against explicit *fatwā*s on this issue. According to Abū Shāma—one of the scholars who moralized at length against the prayers—the pressure was so strong that some *imām*s felt threatened, and complied so as not to lose their jobs.[111]

1.3. *Public and Charitable Functions of Mosques*

In an abortive attempt to avoid the entrance of ritually impure men and women, *dhimmī*s and madmen into the mosque, al-Shayzarī writes against the use of the mosque as a *qāḍī*'s court. He is also apprehensive lest the crowd watching the trial divides into two camps, quarrels and makes noise.[112] In Damascus, however, *qāḍī*s did carry out their work in congregational mosques (as well as in *dār al-ʿadl*—initially intended for sessions of *al-naẓar fī al-maẓālim* (the 'review of complaints', by the ruler, or by his delegate)[113] and probably also at home and on the precincts of *madrasa*s). Al-ʿUmarī

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[109] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:109.
[110] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 4:1745.
[111] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 209, 224–225. See a detailed analysis of this conflict, pp. 63–66, below.
[112] Shayzarī, *Nihāyat al-Rutba*, 113–114.
[113] Eddé, *Alep*, 214–215. On this institution, see Nielsen, *Secular Justice*.

points to the exact location of the seat of the judge in the Umayyad Mosque, likening it to a king's throne, while other sources mention a court secretary who sits at the gate of the great mosque (*min kuttāb al-ḥukkam...bi-bāb al-jāmiʿ*).[114] In Aleppo, both the mosque of the citadel and the great mosque served as the *qāḍī*'s court.[115]

Mosques also served as an asylum for the homeless, the vagabond, the insane and the refugee. Evidently, the *muḥtasib* did not lock the doors of mosques at the end of communal prayers and—contrary to the wishes of al-Shayzarī and another anonymous composer of a *ḥisba* manual[116]—he did not throw out children and madmen, or, for that matter, people who came in to sleep, eat, chat, do business or announce lost property.[117] Other scholars made an attempt to regulate all these secular usages of mosques, rather than eliminate them altogether. Al-Ghazzālī, for example, differentiates between the infrequent use of the terrain of the mosque for commerce in certain kinds of merchandise, playing games, sheltering the insane and the drunkards (if they are quiet) and the like, on the one hand, and frequent and regular practices on the other. While he delegates all those practices to the category of minor sins or objectionable practices, if performed in mosques, he is ready to tolerate them there as long as they occur only infrequently.[118] Likewise, Ṭurṭūshī held that strangers, poor men and pious *muʿtakifūn* may be allowed to spend the night in the mosque, though they should not bring their luggage in, so as not to turn the mosque into a permanent residence. He quotes Mālik ibn Anas's objection to the use of fans, the consumption of meat, and the use of foreign languages (*alsinat al-ʿajam*) inside the mosque.[119] ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī also permitted temporary sleep in the mosque, and the consumption of food (to the exclusion of foul-smelling dishes). He did not object to copyists and calligraphers doing their work in

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[114] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 234.

[115] Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 40.

[116] "Do not allow anyone to be in the mosques except for prayer or remembrance of God...for the mosques are the domain of the soul, and the scales for judging what people do outwardly, and what they possess within. It is more befitting that only those who pray should be in the mosques at night, and not those who sit in conversation" (Buckley, *The Book*, 201). Al-Nawawī quotes *ḥadīth* commanding each believer to perform *al-nahyi ʿan al-munkar* against improper conduct in mosques (al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 77–78).

[117] Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 106; trans. in Buckley, *The Book*, 128.

[118] Buckley, *The Book*, 175.

[119] Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb al-Bidaʿ*, 79–82.

mosques, but asserted that other types of work and commerce were forbidden. In all his relevant *fatwā*s, al-Sulamī reiterates the sanctity (*ḥurma*) of mosques and demands that Muslims behave in mosques as if standing in the very presence of the king in a royal palace.[120]

Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma aimed at a much more modest target when he wrote against the undoubtedly routine practice of begging for alms during the *khuṭba*.[121] In popular stories about beggars, mosques are often the scene of the plot. Al-Jawbarī, for example, tells of a crook who wandered from one mosque to another with a monkey, whom he presented as a bewitched prince, seeking to buy his return to humanity from an evil sorcerer. The compassionate audience assembled there for prayer would always contribute generously.[122] He also tells about a beggar who frequented Friday mosques pretending to be a veteran *jihād* fighter, and about a pair of itinerant beggars who always chose the most elegant mosque in town, to arouse the pity of the people for their faked poverty.[123]

The mosque was not merely a large open public building; it enjoyed a certain inviolability that provided a measure of security for both men and valuables. In the first centuries of Islam, the public treasury (*bayt al-māl*) was kept in the congregational mosque. In the tenth century, according to al-Muqaddasī, there was a treasury "in a chamber resting on pillars," in the great mosque of every provincial capital. Al-Harawī explicitly mentions "the cupola of the treasury" of the Umayyad Mosque.[124] People must have continued to place their treasures there—chroniclers report that many Damascenes had lost a fortune in the fire that consumed the eastern minaret of the congregational mosque in 645/1246.[125]

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[120] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 415–417. The later Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī also deemed residing in mosques illegal, even in mosques combined with *madrasa*s (Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 33).

[121] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:201. Al-Ṭurṭūshī claims that holding a box for collecting alms (*al-tābūt li-l-ṣadaqāt*) in mosques is objectionable (*makrūh*) in Mālik's opinion (Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb al-Bidaʿ*, 79).

[122] Al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 27–28; trans. in Bosworth, *Underworld*, 110. This is one of very few cases in which sorcery (*siḥr*) is explicitly mentioned in our sources. I seriously doubt whether this picture reflects the scope of belief in sorcery and its application in medieval Muslim society; this is a subject that certainly demands further study, perhaps through artifacts, rather than on the basis of historical texts.

[123] Bosworth, *Underworld*, 45–46. Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 30–32.

[124] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 182; trans. in Collins, *The Best*, 153; Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 34–35.

[125] Pedersden,"Masjid," 670; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:175.

The assistant (*nāʾib*) of the *muḥtasib* of Aleppo, al-Kamāl b. al-ʿAjamī, took refuge in the city's congregational mosque in Shaʿbān 629/1232. He feared an angry crowd, protesting a rise in the price of bread. The head of the local militia (*muqaddim al-aḥdāth*) protected him in the mosque, while the mob pelted his house with stones and smashed his *dakka* (bench).[126] Earlier, the Shīʿī poet Aḥmad b. Munīr al-Ṭarābulsī (d. 548/1153), having heard that the ruler of Damascus Ismāʿīl b. Būrī was threatening him with execution on account of a poem he had written, hid in the congregational mosque, waiting for an occasion to leave the city in safety.[127] Al-Malik al-Afḍal sought temporary refuge in Masjid Khātūn of Damascus in 592/1196 with his family, after being compelled to give up his position as ruler of the city to his uncle, al-Malik al-ʿĀdil.[128] The group of Ḥanbalī emigrants, who had left Mt. Nāblus in the 1160's so as not to live under Frankish rule, spent their first three years in Damascus in the mosque of Abū Ṣāliḥ. Members of the local Ḥanbalī community had offered them this asylum. The conditions of living in the crowded mosque must have been very poor: Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, the family historian of Banū Qudāma, reports that forty of their people, mainly children, fell ill and died during one month.[129]

Wandering ascetics sought short-term refuge in mosques. They had to count on local hospitality, and were not always equally lucky. In an anecdote about the *raʾīs* of one of the villages of Mt. Nāblus who went on an errand to Nāblus, the narrator tells of his meeting with three *fuqarāʾ* (poor men, or Ṣūfīs) in the Friday-mosque of the town. It occurred towards the end of the day, and "since nobody came to bring them anything, he went to the market and spent there a *dīnār* he had with him, to buy them bread and something to go with it." In return for the food, the *raʾīs* asked the three to pray for him. He later found out from his village shaykh, that he had had the good fortune to feed the very "people who uphold the earth."[130]

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[126] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubda*, 3:212; Sauvaget considers this event as unusual—Aleppo at that period was usually peaceful (Sauvaget, *Alep*, 136, n. 474).

[127] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 3:1155.

[128] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:442. On the historical circumstances, see Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 101–102.

[129] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 1:68.

[130] See the full story in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 22–23. Typically, the status of *awliyā*ʾ is hidden from the eyes of ordinary men (sometimes even from themselves), but recognized by their own kind. For Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma's

1.4. *The Mosque as Reliquarium*

In early Islam, the cult of relics was considered to be a despicable *bidʿa*,[131] but in the Ayyūbid period, relics of the Prophet and of saints of sorts, as well as loci with traces of their activities, were cherished as repositories of *baraka*, probably no less than their graves. Relics were displayed in mosques and their cult was openly practiced in public. Yāqūt lists a whole inventory of relics, tombs and hallowed spots in his passage in praise of the congregational mosque of Damascus: "it contains the prayer niche of the Companions (*maqsūrat al-ṣaḥāba*),[132] the nook (*zāwiya*) of al-Khaḍir,[133] the head of Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā',[134] and the Qur'ān of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, and the graves of the prophet Hūd[135] and ʿĀ'isha, Muḥammad's wife."[136] Al-Harawī adds to the list also a piece of the stone from which Moses had drawn water during the Exodus.[137] Eschatological traditions contributed another layer to the sanctity of the Umayyad Mosque: ʿĪsā was expected to descend onto the white minaret (the eastern minaret of the great mosque), to take lead of the forces that will assemble to combat Dajjāl (Antichrist), and thus prepare the way for the *mahdī*.[138]

A footprint of Moses (or his grave, according to another tradition) was exhibited in Masjid al-Qadam (or al-Aqdām) in Damascus.[139] The mosque of al-Ghawth in Aleppo boasted of an inscription in the handwriting of the fourth caliph, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, brought from

formulation of the doctrine regarding *awliyā'*, see Makdisi, *Ibn Qudāma*, 23 (Arabic text). For its criticism, see Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 72–73.

[131] Goldziher, *Studies*, 2:322–32; *idem*, "The Cult of the Saints," 302–305.

[132] A 'reminder' of the mosque erected by the Arab conquerors of Damascus, against the southern wall of the Church of St. John, which existed until 86/705 (see Elisséeff, "Dimashḳ," 280).

[133] Supposedly, on the spot where al-Khaḍir, known as a harbinger of the Messiah in both Islamic and Jewish traditions connected with Damascus, prayed (Meri, *The Cult*, 37).

[134] Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 15 (trans., 34); Sourdel-Thomine, "Anciens lieux," 75.

[135] The prophet Hūd is regarded as the builder of the southern wall of Damascus (Meri, *The Cult*, 38).

[136] Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 2:589. He contests some of those traditions, as does al-Harawī (Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 34–35).

[137] Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 34–35; Sourdel-Thomine, "Anciens lieux," 75.

[138] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 282; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:204. See also Von Grunebaum, "The Sacred Character," 26.

[139] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh*, 2:339; Sadan, "Le tombeau," 73.

Ṣiffīn.[140] A part of the skull of Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā' (John the Baptist), discovered in 435/1043–4 in Baʿlabakk, was kept in Maqām Ibrāhīm, on the spot where Abraham allegedly used to sit and milk his flock, inside the mosque of the citadel of Aleppo.[141] The authenticity of this relic was proven, according to Ibn al-ʿAdīm, when it emerged intact from a fire that had consumed the citadel in 609/1212. The sanctuary that sheltered the relic was renovated by al-Malik al-Ẓāhir, and it remained there for some fifty years, until the next fire—one provoked by the Mongols. The skull survived it thanks to two of the commanders of the citadel, who transferred it to a safe haven in the great mosque of Aleppo, and it continued to draw visitors to its new abode.[142] Unfortunately, no chronicler took the trouble to describe in detail the relocation of those relics. Christopher Taylor is probably right in his observation that the ceremonial translation of relics—an essential component of Christian saint worship—as well as the dismemberment of saints, were unknown in Islam.[143] I do not think, however, that his assertion that "the *baraka* of Muslim saints was not made portable through the translation of their relics . . . and remained closely linked to the actual site of the grave" is equally accurate.[144] The sources do tell us about the purchase and translation of relics by those who could afford it, and of the successful implementation of their cult in their new abodes. While most of those cases will be dealt with in section 6.5, that of the ʿUthmānī codex (Muṣḥaf ʿUthmān) belongs here.

A special copy of the Qur'ān known as 'Muṣḥaf ʿUthmān' was kept in the Great Mosque of Damascus. People believed that it had been written at the command of the third caliph, and that he was reading it when the assassins killed him in 35/656, so that it became

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[140] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:131–32; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:461. See also Eddé, *Alep*, 450–51.

[141] As acknowledged by Jews, Christians and Muslims (see Meri, *The Cult*, 198–199). The whole skull, according to another account, was discovered during the transformation of the former Byzantine Cathedral of St. John into the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus. The caliph al-Walīd (r. 705–715) returned it to its grotto, and marked the spot with a special column (Cobb, "Virtual Sacrality," 49–50).

[142] Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*; 12–13; Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:122–23; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:459–60; *RCEA*, 10:91. For the earlier history of this relic, see Meri, *The Cult*, 200.

[143] See, however, Ibn Ṭūlūn's description of the procession of the Prophet's relics from Jerusalem to Damascus in 921/1515 (Meri, *The Cult*, 116–117).

[144] Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 54–55.

stained with his blood. It was moved to Damascus from Tiberias in 500/1107 (or from Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān in 492/1098, according to another version), in order to keep it safe from the Franks, and was placed in an appropriate special case. Its *baraka* was reconfirmed in 543/1148, during the siege the armies of the Second Crusade set on Damascus, when it was brought in a procession to the mosque's courtyard to enhance the efficacy of a special mass prayer that was held there. Men, women and children gathered around it bareheaded, and raised their supplications to God.[145] In 680/1282, under the threat of a second Mongol attack, the ʿUthmānī codex and some other copies of the Qurʾān were taken out on processions in Damascus and Baʿlabakk. The holy books were held above the people's heads, surrounded by preachers, Qurʾān reciters and muezzins. In ordinary times, the ʿUthmānī codex was taken out of its case daily, and people within the mosque crowded around it, to touch it and kiss it.[146] Two other Qurʾāns known to be blessed with special *baraka* were held in small localities in northern Syria. Ḥisn Muthaqqab was home to a Qurʾān allegedely copied by the hand of the righteous Umayyad Caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, who had established the fortress; the coastal town of Antartus (al-Ṭarṭūs) took pride in another personal Qurʾān of the caliph ʿUthmān.[147]

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[145] Meri, *The Cult*, 115; Mouton, "Reliques," 247–50, *idem, Damas*, 84. On the veneration of ancient scrolls of the Torah, see Kraemer, "Jewish Cult," 592.

[146] Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 32–33; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 268: al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 4:92–93; Meri, *The Cult*, 116. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī mentions the belief in attaining blessing through the sight of the codex—"*al-tabarruk bi-naẓar al-muṣḥaf*" (*Mirʾāt*, 8:4); Mouton, "Reliques," 251, n.25; Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl*, 298). A few unusually large pages of another ʿUthmānī codex, also thought to carry bloodstains of the murdered caliph, were kept in Cordova (until the middle of the twelfth century) in a cabinet at the *qibla* wall, and routinely taken out and read from the *miḥrāb* (Soucek, "Material Culture," 302).

[147] Wheatly, *The Places*, 119–120.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIETY IN MOSQUES

The attendance at the Friday-noon assembly in the mosque of the village of Salamiyya (south of Nāblus) was so complete, according to an anecdote in Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī's hagiographical account of the wondrous doings of the shaykhs of that region, that local villagers found it impossible to feed all the guests from neighboring villages. Only thanks to the powers of the shaykh of Salamiyya, who could multiply bread and stew by the touch of his finger, was there enough food for all. Even the women, who apparently sat in an upper gallery, received their share after the local men and their male guests had had their fill.[1]

2.1. *Daily Prayers and Special Devotions*

Needless to say, the sources do not say much about mosque-going, and even less about prayer in the private sphere in twelfth-thirteenth century Syrian society, but some indirect references may be gleaned from them. Queries addressed to ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī, for example, show that commoners—butchers, tanners and laborers in fruit orchards are specifically mentioned—attended communal prayers.[2] The above-mentioned anecdote gives clear evidence of the participation of the women of Mt. Nāblus in communal prayers. The Andalusī traveler Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī of Seville (d. 543/1148), who visited the region on the eve of the First Crusade, describes with enthusiasm the chaste women of Nāblus and surrounding villages who flocked to the mosques on Friday noons.[3] Most scholars seem to have had an ambivalent attitude towards women's mosque-going. Al-Kāsānī exempts women from participation in the Friday noon-prayer and in other public prayers, warning that their presence in the mosque may

[1] See Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikayāt*, 96b; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 146.
[2] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 226, 267, 357.
[3] Drory, "Ḥanbalīs," 100.

be a cause of *fitna*—seduction, or disruption of the proper order. Still, he makes mention of the interdiction on the entrance of women in a state of ritual impurity (caused by menstruation or childbirth) to mosques, acknowledging, so it seems, the improbability of keeping women away from mosques altogether.[4] Ibn Qudāma conveys his preference for the prayer of women at home or in female company, but directs those women who do come to the mosque or the *muṣallā* to the rear lines. Abū Shāma suggests separate prayers at the night of *Niṣf Shaʿbān*.[5] He quotes al-Ṭurṭūshī expressing pious indignation at the coquettish female habit of putting on perfume before going to the mosque.[6] The most munificent approval of the participation of women in public prayers is given by al-Nāṣiḥ ibn al-Ḥanbalī, but he also uses the neutral phrase 'should not be condemned' (*lā yunkaru*) regarding the assembly (*ijtimāʿ*) of men and women for prayers, or for an unofficial sermon (*mawʿiẓa*).[7] Aleppan women could find separate female company for conducting their prayers in the *khānqāh* that Fāṭima Khātūn, al-Malik al-Kāmil's daughter, had established for *faqīrāt* (most likely, poor women rather than Ṣūfīs) in their city. The act of endowment mentions the performance of the five daily prayers on the premises of the *khānqāh*.[8] There were several other Ṣūfī or semi-Ṣūfī institutions for women in Aleppo, Damascus, and probably other cities as well, but it is quite clear that Syrian women frequented mosques and performed their daily prayers in mixed crowds, despite the reservations of some scholars.

An unusual anecdote told about the venerated shaykh of Salamiyya discloses that the shaykh himself had abstained from prayer in his youth, even though the people of his village used to frequent their mosque. At that time, prior to his 'conversion', (which is barely explained in the text) whenever he would "hear the muezzin recite the call for prayer, he would curse and argue with the people who were praying."[9] In some other villages in that vicinity, so we are told in praise of Shaykh Dhayyāl Abū ʿUmar (d. 614/1217), people

[4] Al-Kāsānī, *Badāʾiʿ*, 1:208, 2:108.
[5] See below.
[6] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 134, 135.
[7] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:195–199. See also al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 38, in favor of the imāma of women for women.
[8] Ṭabbākh, *Iʿlām*, 4:41; Eddé, Alep, 428–429.
[9] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 97b; Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 149.

became serious about their prayers thanks to the shaykh's *baraka*.[10] Implicitly, they had been less devout previously.

In urban elite circles, men suspected of philosophical inclinations and heretical views are said to have forgone regular prayer, or abstained from prayer altogether, as part of their dishonorable attitude towards the *sharīʿa*. The students of the renowned Shāfiʿī jurist, theologian and physician Sayf al-Din al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233), at the Madrasa al-ʿAzīziyya in Damascus, suspected that he did not pray, most likely because of his works in logic, *kalām* and philosophy,[11] and claimed to have proven their assertion with the following trick. They marked one of his feet with ink while he was sleeping, and observed the place for two consecutive days. The persistence of the mark convinced them that al-Āmidī did not perform the ritual ablutions.[12]

Al-Nawawī, questioned about the way one should treat an adult Muslim who repeatedly neglects his prayers out of laziness, differentiates between a man who has been continually negligent (and therefore is considered legally incompetent [*sic*] and should not take possession of *zakāt* money), and one who used to pray, and suddenly became negligent.[13] Al-Nawawī answers laconically, and does not seize the opportunity to lecture on the evils of indolence, nor on the dangers of skipping prayers. Indeed, in the material I have found *ʿulamāʾ* admonish people for their praying habits; but rather than criticize worshippers' negligence, they find fault with their enthusiasm for special prayers with dubious *sharʿī* justification, "the worst cases being the imitation of the 'standing' (*wuqūf*) performed on ʿArafāt in mosques (*al-taʿrīf*), and the thousand *rakʿa*s of *Niṣf Shaʿbān* (*al-alfiyya*) and the prayer of *al-raghāʾib*."[14]

Niṣf Shaʿbān drew only moderate scholarly antagonism.[15] Abū Shāma, who warns that over-crowded mosques incite immoral behavior and the transgression of sexual boundaries, admits that those evils

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[10] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikayāt*, 120a; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 153.

[11] *Daqāʾiq al-Ḥaqāʾiq, al-Mubīn fī Maʿānī Alfāẓ al-Ḥukamāʾ wa-l-Mutakallimīn*, and *Kashf al-Tamwīḥāt*—a commentary upon Ibn Sīnā's Book of directives and remarks. His *al-Maʾākhidh ʿalā al-Imām al-Rāzī* combines *kalām* and philosophy.

[12] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 3:293–94; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:306–307. See also Sourdel, "al-Āmidī," and Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 208–209.

[13] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 56; translation in Calder *et al., Classical Islam*, 197.

[14] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 117.

[15] See Fierro, "Treatises," 224–225.

were not an inherent part of the special prayers of *Niṣf Shaʿbān*. His description of the night of mid-Shaʿbān 626/1229, celebrated only a fortnight after the end of a siege on Damascus, when everyone was enjoying the return of peace and plenty to the city, is idyllic. He even implicitly likens the atmosphere of that night to that of the Garden of Eden.[16] However, true to his constant indignation with people who prefer to fulfill supererogatory acts of devotion at the expense of the daily obligatory religious duties, Abū Shāma mentions the possible detrimental consequences of attendance at the rituals of *Niṣf Shaʿbān*: one might oversleep and miss the morning prayer of the next day![17]

The prayers of *al-tarāwīḥ*, held during the nights of the month of Ramaḍān, were hardly controversial, yet *ʿulamāʾ* tried to cool down popular passion for them.[18] ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī issued a *fatwā* recommending prayer at home rather than in mosques on the nights of Ramaḍān, and the recitation of the whole Qurʾān rather than the customary repetition of *sūrat al-ikhlāṣ* (the short *sūra* 112),[19] thus removing the elements that probably most appealed to the ordinary believer: meeting friends at the communal gathering, and the ceremonial, almost ecstatic nature of the ritual. Al-Sulamī was obviously ignored. Abū Shāma and al-Nawawī restricted their criticism of *al-tarāwīḥ* to a specific custom: the recitation of *sūrat al-anʿām* in the course of the last *rakʿa* instead of its recitation during the first. Al-Nawawī uses surprisingly harsh language. He denounces this seemingly minor deviation from the agreed-upon *sunna* a '*bidʿa makrūha*' (reprehensible innovation), begging the devout not only to refrain from partaking in it, but also to engage in an active campaign against it.[20] Al-Shahrazūrī, in contrast, had no such reservations: he installed the vigil of *Niṣf Shaʿbān* in his *madrasa*. He also encouraged his students to 'enliven' with special religious devotions four additional nights a year: the 27th of Ramaḍān, the nights of the two festivals and the first night of Muḥarram. He also did not oppose the prayers of *al-raghāʾib* that were held between the two evening

[16] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 155.
[17] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 133–136.
[18] Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 119–120; Fierro, "Treatises," 222–223.
[19] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 424.
[20] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 30, 238.

prayers and into the night of the first Friday of the month of Rajab, the eighth month of the Arab calendar.

Rajab was observed as a holy month in pre-Islamic times. A well known prophetic *ḥadīth* in favor of the continuation of its sacredness into Islamic times claims that "Rajab is the month of God."[21] According to most scholars, however, a special prayer on the month of Rajab was a lamentable innovation instituted in Jerusalem towards the end of the fifth/eleventh century, unsupported by a shred of evidence that the Prophet had ever performed it or approved of it.[22] But commoners, especially those who were "overzealous, desiring more devotions," as well as students in some *madrasa*s, loved the communal nocturnal gathering in brightly lit mosques. The elaborate ritual of *al-raghāʾib* was more exciting than the everyday obligatory prayers, and—particularly for those who fasted during the day (another contentious habit)—it was more demanding, but the effort was short and concentrated and probably more satisfying. Besides, people trusted its power to offset sin, and the night of *al-raghāʾib*, just like that of *Niṣf Shaʿbān*, was considered a time of reckoning (when "the quill-pens are busy testifying, noting down acts of devotion and erasing sins"). The rewards expected were greater than those attributed to the routine performance of prayers.[23]

A rich array of texts—anti-*bidaʿ* treatises, collections of *fatwā*s, *ḥisba* manuals, polemical treatises, chronicles and biographical dictionaries—gives us the opportunity to follow the dissemination of the custom chronologically and geographically (from Jerusalem to Damascus, Cairo and Ḥarrān), from mosques into *madrasa*s.[24] Furthermore, those texts allow the study of thirteenth century legal reasoning, power struggles and politics. The whole issue offers some insights into the psychology of the crowd and of the *ʿulamāʾ*, and a

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[21] Kister, "Rajab." The *ḥadīth* continues as follows: "Shaʿbān is my month and Ramaḍān is the month of the people." Al-Ṭurṭūshī, however, regarded the sanctification of the month of Rajab "bygone remnants of the beliefs of the age of ignorance—*innamā hiyya ghabirāt min baqāyā ʿuqūdihim al-jāhiliyya*" (*Kitāb al-Bidaʿ*, 102).

[22] See al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb al-Bidaʿ*, 96; Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 238; al-Sulamī, *al-Taghrīb*, as quoted in: Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:255; Kister, "Rajab."

[23] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 106, 158; Ibn al-Athīr, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, *al-Mathal*, 2:150.

[24] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 209, 223–225. Allegedly, the righteous people of Alexandria and the Maghrib abstained from it (Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyya*, 8:255).

better understanding of the interplay between those two parties and rulers, and of the dynamics of religious life.

In 632/1235 al-Malik al-Kāmil, pressed by some leading *ʿulamāʾ*, issued a ban on *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib*.[25] It must have been disregarded, as less than five years later, shortly after his appointment to the position of *khaṭīb* of the great mosque of Damascus, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Sulamī launched his campaign for the revivification of the sunna and the killing-off of *bidaʿ* with an attack on *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib*. On the eve of Rajab 637/1240, in the course of his Friday sermon, al-Sulamī claimed that it was a reprehensible *bidʿa*, and that the *ḥadīth* pertaining to it was falsely attributed to the Prophet. He also announced unequivocally that he would not lead the people in this prayer, and that he forbids them to perform it. In a written "call to abstain from *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib*," al-Sulamī warned the people neither to engage in *bidaʿ* nor to seek closeness to God in ways he did not command.[26] The people, unconvinced, demanded that the prayers be held as had become the custom, and the ruler of Damascus was again called to intervene. This undoubtedly placed the ruler al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl in an extremely uncomfortable situation.[27] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī, a colleague of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām came to his aid, and composed a treatise presenting the prayer of *al-raghāʾib* in a favorable light.

Ibn al-Shahrazūrī admits the lack of a reliable *ḥadīth* to support the prayers,[28] and their late appearance (namely, that they had spread among the people in the fourth/tenth century). Yet, he relegates them to the category of *bidʿa ḥasana* (praiseworthy innovation), claiming that prayer is the best pastime of all, especially for men who might otherwise spend their day in dubious ways. Al-Shahrazūrī goes on to condemn al-Sulamī for wishing "to deprive the people of a religious devotion that they had become accustomed to perform, on a noble and undoubtedly meritorious night." Other Damascene scholars whom we know to have been involved in the debate, sided with al-Sulamī,

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[25] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 166; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:148.

[26] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 149–150. Al-Sulamī permits, and even encourages, the fast in Rajab (al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 336).

[27] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 149–150.

[28] Alabānī, *Musājala*, 14–18. As author of the *Muqaddima*, one of the most detailed and influential works on *ḥadīth* scholarship, al-Shahrazūrī probably could not have argued otherwise.

and labeled their opponents, al-Shahrazūrī included, as "commoners and those who are not versed in the study of the *sharīʿa*."[29]

Have we then prematurely discarded the two-tiered model of religion? I do not think so. A second look at the debate reveals that the actual disagreement between the learned elite and the devout ordinary believers was rather limited. The very practices that *ʿulamāʾ* reject for Rajab, were endorsed and even performed by scholars on Shaʿbān, Ramaḍān or *Mawlid al-Nabī*. Moreover, one cannot but admit the pettiness of many of the arguments put forth against the performance of the special prayers on Rajab. Al-Sulamī, Abū Shāma and al-Nawawī claim, for example, that "the rites…are not done at the proper times with the proper detail"; that singling out certain days during the year for special devotions is prohibited in the first place; worst yet—that ignorant people may be misled to believe that *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* are obligatory (*sunna*) rather than an optional pious deed. They also complain that lighting the mosques for the entire night is wasteful and extravagant. As for faults in specific details of ritual, they highlight the performance of an even rather than an odd number of *rakʿa*s, and the postponement of breakfast on the following morning—stressing that both are contrary to *ḥadīth*.[30]

The main argument against *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* was, of course, the dearth of any sound *ḥadīth* in support of their performance.[31] From this perspective, the debate over *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* may reflect broader tensions regarding religious authority, rather than the etiquette of religious behavior. As Jonathan Berkey had observed, the anti-*bidaʿ* discourse concentrates on the issue of reliable authority, and aims at securing the grip of the religious establishment on the definition of proper Islam, to the exclusion of all other definitions.[32] My impression is that the excessive fuss over minor details of ritual primarily reflects two things: one—a competition within the ranks of the *ʿulamāʾ*, each of whom aspired to leadership in piety and hoped to gain the prestige accorded to the truly devoted and uncompromising. Two—a basic conservative impulse, a fear that the slightest concession to change and innovation might lead to many further, more dangerous, concessions. Alexander Knysh recognizes in this anti-*bidʿa* discourse

[29] Alabānī, *Musājala*, 14–18.
[30] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:251–254.
[31] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 117.
[32] Berkey, *Popular Preachers*, 76, 94.

the militancy, the unswerving commitment and the solicitude for the letter of the *sharīʿa* of the self-appointed guardians of the *sunna*—a prefiguration of Ibn Taymiyya.[33]

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī, the scholar who made the distinction between forbidden spurious (*mawḍūʿ*) traditions, and 'weak' traditions (*al-aḥādīth al-ḍaʿīfa*) "which despite their weakness [of *isnād*] convey truth in their meaning, and may be transmitted in exhortation (*fī al-targhīb*),"[34] exemplifies a different attitude. He was prepared to go along with the crowd rather than fight popular trends. Seeming to be unconcerned about the exclusiveness of scholarly authority, and not inclined to the strict rejection of new forms of pious behavior, al-Shahrazūrī employs the category of *bidʿa ḥasana*, to serve as a system parallel to the *sharīʿa*, or as a supplement to it, one without negative connotations.[35] But ultimately, the result of the controversy around *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* is an indication of the power of pressure 'from below'. It brings to life the active involvement of commoners in shaping religious norms in general, and the liturgical calendar in the mosque in particular. Alongside the evidence of regular mosque going, the debate about *al-raghāʾib* gives evidence to the 'mainstream' piety of commoners, and does not reveal a subversive stratum of 'popular' religion.[36]

2.2. *Qurʾān Recitation*

Al-Nawawī, in his preface to *al-Tibyān fī Adab Ḥamalat al-Qurʾān*—an exposition of the rules of conduct for those who know the Qurʾān by heart (literaly: those who carry the Qurʾān)—explains his purpose in composing the book: "I have seen the people of our city Damascus,

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[33] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 62, 66.

[34] Berkey, *Popular Preachers*, 76.

[35] As suggested by Vardit Rispler, in her "Towards New Understanding," 320, 325; *idem*, "20th Century," 82. On the categories of *sunna* and *bidʿa* and the 'creative tension' between them as a key characteristic of the discourse of Islamic civilization, see also Fierro, "Treatises against innovation," 211, 240; and Berkey's thought-provoking discussion in "Tradition," 7–8, 40–41, 49–50. In al-Sulamī's classification of *bidaʿ* there are no less than five categories, parallel to *al-aḥkām al-khamsa* (Rispler, "Towards New Understanding," 325; al-Sulamī, *Qawāʿid al-Aḥkām*, 220–221).

[36] For the continuation of the debate about *Niṣf Shaʿbān* and *al-raghāʾib* in Mamlūk times, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 14:46, 235; Winter, "Religious Life," 225.

may God protect it, and the rest of the cities of Islam, busy reading the Holy Qurʾān, teaching and learning it, studying and lecturing it; singly and in groups; exerting themselves day and night…and that has moved me to write a short essay about the proper rules of conduct for those who know the Qurʾān by heart, and for those who learn it and study its words."[37] A fellow Damascene, a contemporary of al-Nawawī, also attests to the frequent reading of the Qurʾān in the city, but less romantically. He reports, in a query posed to the *muftī* ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī, that "when a party (*jamāʿa*) assembles for the recitation of the Book of God, may He be exalted, each person reads in his turn a *juzʾ* (the thirtieth part of the Qurʾān), and the others—well, some of them listen, and the rest chat."[38] Qurʾān recitation (*qirāʾa*, or *tilāwa*, to be differentiated from the closely related *taʿlīm*—study), and the attendance at sessions of recitation, were undoubtedly extremely popular liturgical activities, and a key component of Islamic personal piety, and of the communal liturgical calendar. Both were thought to secure individual and collective rewards.

Recitations were held daily in mosques; according to al-Nawawī, the mosque is the favored place for reading as it is the cleanest and most honorable of places.[39] But the Qurʾān was recited in many other locations, and on occasions: as a prelude to ceremonies and assemblies, on graves and during funerals, as means of coping with a crisis, on festivals and special nights (such as *Niṣf Shaʿbān*). Public recitation was performed spontaneously, or in organized routine sessions, with or without the supervision of professional reciters. The performance of an expert reciter could evoke a profound religious experience, as well as aesthetic pleasure.[40]

Ibn Jubayr asserts that the glory of the Umayyad mosque of Damascus derives from the constant recitation of Qurʾān on its precincts. Every day, immediately after the morning-prayer, a recitation of the

[37] Al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyān*, 11.

[38] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 485–486. Quite expectedly, he remarks that chatting is bad manners. For more *fatwā*s on Qurʾān recitation, see *ibid*., 258, 272, 353, 414, 429–430; al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 93–94.

[39] Al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyān*, 37.

[40] See Ibn Jubayr's ecstatic reaction to Qurʾān recitation at *majālis al-waʿẓ* in Baghdad (Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 221–222). On the many aspects of Qurʾān recitation in Islamic culture, see Nelson, *The Art*.

portion known as *al-sub*ʿ—the seven long *sūra*s from *al-baqara* (2) to *al-tawba* (9)—is performed. Later in the day, following the afternoon-prayer, some 500 men and boys assemble for the recitation of *al-kawthariyya*—a much shorter portion, composed of the last seven *sūra*s of the Qurʾān, beginning with *sūrat al-kawthar* (108). The participants, many of whom were not proficient readers (i.e. did not know the Qurʾān by heart perfectly) received a small stipend for their recitation. Ibn Jubayr comments that the fathers of wealthy boys forbid them to accept money, but for the others it is a decent source of income.[41] Ibn Shaddād, writing ninety years after Ibn Jubayr, attests to the continuity of those routines. He estimates that in his days 420 men took part in the daily recitation of *al-kawthariyya*, a custom which he attributes to Nūr al-Dīn's initiative. On top of that, orphan boys recited every evening *sūrat al-ikhlāṣ* (112) three times, proclaiming the unity of God. The divine recompense (*thawāb*), according to Ibn Shaddād's understanding, was due to the endower of the *waqf*. If the participants in the reading felt that they themselves, or at least they too, were entitled to heavenly reward, legal scholars concur with their notion.[42] Ibn Shaddād goes on to list 210 circles for the recitation and study of Qurʾān, held under the supervision of 73 overseers (*mutaṣaddirūn*).[43] A *waqfiyya* formulated *ca*. 617/1220 includes a list of one hundred poor (*fuqarāʾ*) of the Ḥanbalī community of Damascus, who were entitled to a stipend for their participation in daily recitation. This particular session was held between the afternoon and the evening prayer at the *miḥrāb* of the Ḥanbalīs.[44] The funds came from endowments established by affluent Ḥanbalīs, such as the *qāḍī* ʿUthmān b. Asʿad b. al-Munajjā (d. 643/1246). In a long and detailed *waqfiyya*, prepared seven years before his death, Ibn al-Munajjā stipulated, among other things, the purchase of bread and warm clothing for the poor who would memorize and recite the Qurʾān at his grave, or else—if he should be buried away from Mt. Qāsyūn—at the Ḥanbalī circle (*ḥalaqa*) in the great mosque of Damascus. He specifically excluded "those with heretical doctrines

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[41] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 271–272, 291.
[42] See Gade, "Recitation of the Qurʾān," 370–371; see also Pahlitzsch, "Concern," 331, n. 14.
[43] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq-Dimashq*, 81–85.
[44] Sourdel, "Deux documents," 141–52.

(*al-munasabūna ilā al-bidaʿ*)" from the beneficiaries of his endowment, and ordered that the supervisor in charge of the endowment be "the best of the Ḥanbalī school."[45]

The Ḥanbalī Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī recommends that each Muslim complete a reading of the entire Qurʾān once in seven days, or, at the very least—once in forty days. He seems to be suggesting that the reading be performed in the private sphere, or at least celebrated there, as he recommends that family members be assembled for the conclusion of the reading (*ʿinda khatm al-Qurʾān*).[46] Recitation of Qurʾān and the study of Qurʾān took place in rural mosques as well, such as that of the village of Saqba, east of Damascus. Its *khaṭīb*, Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Kafaṭābī, who died at the age of ninety (at the end of the twelfth century), taught the Qurʾān to a group of local villagers.[47] ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Jubāʾī (d. 605/1208), who was born to a Christian family in a village of Mt. Lebanon, recalls having heard a company of Muslims reciting the Qurʾān in his youth. He was drawn to listen and deeply affected, an experience which had influenced his decision to convert to Islam. Conversion to Islam under the sway of the sound of the Qurʾān is a well known topos in Islamic lore, of course,[48] but we have no good reason to doubt the authenticity of the report about Qurʾān recitation in a medieval village of Mt. Lebanon.

2.3. *Study-Circles*

"We were attending a class by al-Ḥāfiẓ [the *muḥaddith* ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī] outdoors, on a very hot day," reports his nephew, the historian Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī. "He said: 'Let us go into the

[45] Al-Munajjid, *Waqf al-Qāḍī*, 31–32. For more on intra-communal Ḥanbalī charity, see Talmon-Heller, "Fidelity."

[46] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 2:610–11.

[47] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:620.

[48] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:44. For earlier stories of conversion to Islam under the influence of the recitation of Qurʾān, see Juynboll, "The Position," 241–245; Lazarus-Yafeh, "ʿUmar," 6. ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī, a contemporary of al-Jubāʾī claims to have witnessed such a case: he was invited to dinner in Isfahan. The other guest was a "*shamsī*" (sun-worshipper pagan), who was so deeply impressed by ʿAbd al-Ghanī's nocturnal recitation of the Qurʾān that he converted to Islam several days later (Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 20:553).

mosque.' Just as we were ready to go, a cloud covered the sun, and he told us to sit down again. I saw our friends looking at each other, the word spreading among them: 'Why, this is a *karāma* (a wondrous deed)! There was not a cloud to be seen in the sky'!"[49] The thrust of this anecdote is, of course, the wondrous combination of religious learning and *baraka* in ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī's person, but for us it may serve as a lively piece of evidence on the loci of study. Obviously, the advent of the *madrasa* in Syria did not put an end to study in mosques. This is true not only regarding peripheral neighborhoods and smaller towns, where the *madrasa* arrived relatively late,[50] or Ḥanbalī and Mālikī communities, who for various reasons had fewer *madrasa*s at their disposal. It pertains also to the patterns of study of Ḥanafīs and Shāfiʿīs (the dominant schools of law in Zangid and Ayyūbid Syria), residents of the central cities. Mosques were probably the main location for the study of *ḥadīth*, though *samāʿāt* certificates record also *ḥadīth* classes held in private homes, shops, mausolea, urban and rural fruit orchards and simply outdoors.[51] Whether approached as an intellectual enterprise, or as a spiritual pursuit, *ḥadīth* recitation was extremely popular in medieval Syria. ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī engaged in crowded and highly emotional readings of *ḥadīth* on Thursday nights and on Fridays, in the Umayyad congregational mosque. His son, ʿIzz al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥāfiẓ (d. 613/1216), who had taught *ḥadīth* in the smaller mosque of Dār al-Biṭṭīkh, received al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam's permission to continue that tradition after ʿAbd al-Ghanī's death (or perhaps following his exile from Damascus).[52]

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[49] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:17.

[50] In the middle of the sixth/twelfth century there were seven *madrasa*s in Damascus, and by the end of the Ayyūbid period—85 *madrasa*s (Gilbert, "Institutionalization," 115, 119). In the small town of Nāblus, for example, *madrasa*s appeared only in the Mamlūk period (al-Bishāwī, *Nāblus*, 206). It was much cheaper to use an existing edifice than to build a new one, of course.

[51] *Samāʿāt* show that most recorded classes of *ḥadīth* were held in mosques, but see Leder *et al*., *Samāʿāt*, 48–49, 54, 56, 69, 77, 93, 138, for examples of other indoor and outdoor locations. An especially informative certificate reveals that the *ḥadīth* collection of Ibn Shādhān (d. 426/1036) was read in Bayṭāriyya (a village in the Ghūṭa of Damascus) for eleven men who were on a hunting excursion, again in the neighboring village of al-Fayja, then in the mausoleum of al-Malik al-Nāṣir in Damascus (*ibid*., 61–63).

[52] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:47.

Even scholars who held posts in *madrasa*s, convened classes in mosques. Some of them were supported by *waqf*s just like their peers in *madrasa*s. According to al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349), the endowments dedicated to the great mosque of Damascus provided for a *mudarris* and a group of *fuqahāʾ* in each *miḥrāb*, namely—for each school of law—well into the Mamlūk period. Al-ʿUmarī describes the mosque as a bustling house of learning: always full of reciters of Qurʾān, transmitters of *ḥadīth, muftī*s and other legal scholars.[53] One endowment for learning was established by a woman named Fāṭima bint ʿAlī al-Ghassānī (d. 567/1171–2), a scion of a Mālikī family that had lived in Damascus for several generations. She wished to support Mālikī students of law in the Zāwiyat al-Mālikiyya of the mosque.[54] Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī taught *uṣūl al-fiqh* (the foundations of jurisprudence) in sessions that convened in the Umayyad mosque on Tuesdays and Fridays, and were said to have been attended by "the greatest scholars (*akābir al-ʿulamāʾ*)."[55] Defined as *majālis al-munāẓara* (sessions for scholarly disputation), these classes were indeed intended for the learned, rather than for large audiences.

ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (d. 629/1231) acknowledges, that once he settled in Damascus (receiving a hundred *dinār*s monthly for teaching in the great mosque) he lost all interest in philosophy and the sciences of the ancients, realizing their lowliness.[56] His salary (a very high one in those days) was provided for by endowments made especially for him by Saladin and his sons. They continued to support him after his move to Cairo to teach at the al-Azhar Mosque, and later, when he taught a variety of subjects at the al-Aqṣā Mosque.[57] The *ḥadīth* teacher whose classes convened not far from ʿAbd al-Laṭīf's study-circle (*ḥalaqa*) in the Umayyad mosque of Damascus[58] also benefited

[53] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 1:195, 202.
[54] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 235; Pouzet, "Maghrébins," 178.
[55] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:307.
[56] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 9:4239, Ibn Abī-ʿUṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, 2:209. He admits having recognized the evil, or corruption, of writings of Ibn Sīnā and Maimonides (whom he knew in person).
[57] For a detailed curriculum vitae of ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, see Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 84–91.
[58] On the *ḥalaqa* and its seating arrangements, see Ephrat, *Learned Society*, 76–77.

from a *waqf* established for this purpose by the Damascene scholar Ibn ʿUrwa, as did his students.[59]

ʿAlī b. Muḥammad ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 558/1163 or 643/1245) also taught Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and Arabic in a study-circle in the congregational mosque of Damascus. Thousands of students read the Qurʾān from cover to cover under his direction. Taking into account that he allowed several students to recite different *sūra*s to him at the same time—a practice that may well be regarded as a corruption of the system of learning by dictation (*imlāʾ*)—the figure of thousands is perhaps not that far-fetched. There were always people in line, waiting for their turn to join his study-circle at the congregational mosque.[60] The privileged students would see him home at the end of the day, and the whole company is said to have continued their recitation all the way from the Umayyad Mosque up to al-Ṣāliḥiyya neighborhood on Mt. Qāsyūn. The poetic exaggeration apparent in this laudatory description of al-Sakhāwī's devotion to his mission conveys the great importance attributed to the study of Qurʾān in the society we are studying. Shaykh Abū ʿUmar Ibn Qudāma (d. 607/1210), who taught the people Qur'ān every morning in the mosque of Mt. Qāsyūn, expresses the same idea when he weighs his merit as a teacher of Qur'ān against all the good works he had performed during his lifetime.[61] As well known, memorizing at least part of the Qurʾān was the essential, if not the sole purpose of the standard education of Muslim children in the medieval Middle East. The mastery of the whole text by heart was considered to be a significant religious and social asset for life: a source of pride, *baraka*, and power. Knowledge of the correct rules of recitation (which supposedly maintain the very intonation of the Jibrīl (the angel Gabriel), reciting the verses for the first time before Muḥammad) was the basis for a rather profitable and handy occupation—that of the professional reciter (*muqriʿ*).[62]

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[59] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 136.

[60] Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ," 501. See Ibn al-Wardī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:171.

[61] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 71; Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Aḥwāl*, 124b.

[62] ʿAlī b. al-Qāsim b. Yu'annash (d. 605/1208–9), a Qur'ān reciter who emigrated to Aleppo from al-Andalus, bought a house from it ("*taṣaddara bihā al-iqrāʾ, wa-dakhala lahu rizq, wa-ishtarā lahu dār*" Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 51:182). *Qurrāʾ* are mentioned in a list of recipients of Nūr al-Dīn's presents and charitable gifts—"*idrārāt wa-ṣadaqāt*." (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 11:296).

Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*kalām*), belle lettres (*adab*), logic (*manṭiq*), grammar (*naḥw*), history (*taʾrīkh*) and Ṣūfī thought (*taṣawwuf*) were also taught in mosques, not necessarily in the central communal mosque.[63] Grammar classes were held on a regular basis and in a fixed place in the great mosque of Damascus. Abū Shāma lists the names of four successive teachers who presided over those classes.[64] Abū Shāma himself taught the abridged version of Ibn ʿAsākir's *Taʾrikh Dimashq* (History of Damascus) and his own *al-Rawḍatayn fi Akhbār al-Dawlatayn* (the history of the Zangids and Ayyūbids) at the same mosque (and at the Turba al-Ashrafiyya). He reports that the intellectual and social elite of town attended those classes. Ibn ʿAsākir's voluminous history was taught in the congregational mosque a couple of decades earlier by the author himself. For over a month, as many as seventy, and up to eighty-five people (an above-average number) frequented those readings twice a week—on Tuesdays and Fridays. Ibn ʿAsākir's son, Bahāʾ al-Dīn ibn ʿAsākir (d. 600/1203), also performed the reading of the *Taʾrīkh*.[65] Fans of a more entertaining, and at the same time perfectly 'devotional' genre, probably preferred to listen to Ibn Rājiḥ al-Anṣarī al-Maqdisī, who read aloud tales of the righteous (*akhbār al-ṣāliḥīn*).[66] Ibn Rājiḥ used to read those tales sitting on the steps leading to the *minbar* of Jāmiʿ Qāsyūn each Friday after the communal prayer.[67] Likewise, I think, people attended the reading of Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī's *Faḍāʾil al-Quds* (traditions in praise of Jerusalem, composed around 410/1019–20), and similar works. We know that a reading of al-Wāsiṭī was held in the mosque of Acre in September 583/1187, shortly before Saladin's reconquest of Jerusalem, and on several other occasions.[68]

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[63] See Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq*, 53; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 5:2390; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 202, 63; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:365; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 5:158. See also Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq—Dimashq*, 132. The great Ṣūfī master Ibn al-ʿArabī instructed his disciples in the great mosque of Damascus (Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 74).

[64] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 202; Pouzet, *Damas*, 150–151.

[65] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 41, 43, 47, 69; Antrim, "Ibn ʿAsākir's Representation," 122–123.

[66] Describing the piety of *atābeg* Shihāb al-Dīn b. Tughril (631/1233–4), a manumitted *mamlūk* of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī tells us that the man used to spend the first third of his nights reading stories of righteous men and their deeds—*ḥikāyāt al-ṣāliḥīn wa-aḥwāl al-nās wa-maḥāsinihim* (Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:685).

[67] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 130.

[68] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 162–163. On the growing popularity of the *Faḍāʾil* literature, see Sivan, "*Faḍāʾil al-Quds*"; *ibid*., "The Sanctity."

Study circles in mosques seem to have been open to all, though naturally, classes in *fiqh*, disputation, or logic were intelligible to far fewer men than the reading of hagiographical tales, which could also be consumed and enjoyed by those who had only a basic religious education. As Berkey had aptly noted, the great significance attributed in Islam to learning as a form of piety and as a source of *baraka*, made the pursuit of at least some degree of Islamic education truly popular. Moreover, the basic values that guided the transmission of knowledge in the Islamic world, especially its oral nature and its informality, allowed the inclusion of a broad spectrum of the population.[69] Even if al-Ghazzālī's recommendation, that "in every mosque and part of town there should be someone versed in Islamic law who instructs people in their religion. The same applies to every village," remained wishful thinking, the fact that so many religious instructors sat in and near mosques made learning accessible to many. 'Part-timers', namely those who could afford to devote themselves to recitation or learning only a few minutes a day, usually before or after prayers, could also take part.[70]

Children were taught in mosques despite the reservations of some *ʿulamāʾ*, who thought that youngsters were noisy and filthy, and that school-teaching, as a salaried trade, was forbidden in the mosques.[71] The attachment of the *kuttāb* to a mosque, or to some other religious institution was, most likely, an ancient custom, inherited from Byzantium, where primary schools were attached to churches and monasteries.[72] In the Umayyad mosque of Damascus, school-teachers (*muʿallimūn al-ṣibyān*) held classes in special niches.[73] Nūr al-Dīn, who is said to have exhibited special care for the education of orphans, and for decent pay for their teachers, was one of the endowers of those *kuttāb*.[74]

Abū Shāma remembers having studied the Qur'ān in one of those niches of the great mosque of Damascus as a child. He was greatly impressed, at that time, by the scholars who used to spend their days

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[69] Berkey, *The Transmission*, 216.
[70] Buckley, *Islamic Market Inspector*, 183.
[71] Buckley, *Islamic Market Inspector*, 119; Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb al-Bidaʿ*, 88.
[72] Baer, "Muslim Teaching," 73.
[73] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 271.
[74] Elisséeff, "Un document," 138. For the care for the education of orphans in Islamic medieval societies, see Lev, *Charity*, 85–90.

in the mosque, and by the respect they enjoyed. He daydreamed that some day he himself would achieve such learning and status. In the same autobiographical passage, Abū Shāma boasts of having been, indeed, an unusually diligent child.[75] The childhood memories of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 588/1192), who grew up to be the supervisor of the *waqf* endowments (*mutawallī al-awqāf*) of the great mosque of Aleppo, were not as rosy. He and his brother studied Qurʾān together in the congregational mosque, but while his brother had a fine memory and mastered the Qurʾān by heart easily, he agonized for days, trying to commit to memory *sūrat al-qalam* (only nineteen verses long).[76] A child with a poor memory must have had a hard time indeed: in medieval miniatures of *kuttāb* the teacher is usually pictured with a big beard and an intimidating rod.[77] Moreover, the curriculum of *kuttāb*—whether held in mosques, private homes, or special buildings—included very little besides the study of the Qurʾān by heart (*talqīn*). Perhaps, as suggested by Avner Giladi, this was the result of parents' concern with providing the child (whose chances of survival past childhood were uncertain) first, and as quickly as possible, with the basic knowledge that might protect him from the fires of hell in the afterlife—the words of the Qurʾān.[78]

Some scholars thought this basic curriculum insufficient: the twelfth century writer al-Shayzarī suggested a much wider range of subjects for elementary education: Arabic, arithmetic, poetry (only proper poetry: untainted with eroticism or Shīʿī inclinations) and *ḥadīth*. In his opinion, as presented (and applauded) by Ibn Khaldūn, Qurʾānic studies should follow the study of other subjects, so that the child will

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[75] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 37–38. He also tells that while pregnant with him, his mother dreamt that she was calling the faithful to prayer from the top of the minaret. She hurried to an oneirologist, who told her that she would bear a son famous in learning and piety.

[76] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 5:2430–31. Ibn al-ʿAdīm himself admits to having studied texts by heart for the pocket money and presents his father promised him (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ* 5:2085). For the value of memorizing in medieval Islamic culture, see Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 145–147.

[77] Baer, "Muslim Teaching," 76–77.

[78] Giladi, "Individualism," 105–106. The home schooling of the elite must have been richer: Saladin, for example, had his sons and *mamlūk*s listen to the recitation of *ḥadīth* and memorize the theological treatise of Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nīsābūrī by heart, "so that it became fixed in their minds from infancy." (Ibn Shaddād, *Sīrat al-Sulṭān*, 57, 60; trans. in Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 18, 20). For much more about the Qurʾānic school, see Lev, *Charity*, 85–94.

be well-prepared and able to understand the Qurʾān.[79] Some parents, most likely of the scholarly class, supplemented the education their sons received at the *maktab* by taking them to sessions of *ḥadīth* recitation in private homes and in other locations. The very young age at which children, boys and girls, were exposed to *ḥadīth* must have reflected the parent's hope that some day, when the children grew old, they would remain the only ones to claim the teaching permit (*ijāza*) of certain important transmitters. Such a claim accorded honor, and in some cases, also material benefits.[80]

Mosques provided an ideal space for individual study and contemplation, albeit a second-best venue of learning in medieval Muslim society, which strongly advocated the supervision of a teacher, and attributed great value to the personal relationship between shaykh and disciple.[81] The silent reading of a book was thus certainly not the typical way of learning, [82] but mosque-libraries made it possible. People donated books to mosques, and the larger mosques seem to have had sizable libraries, which sometimes attracted copyists from great distances.[83] The Damascene grammarian Abū al-Yaman al-Kindī (d. 613/1217), for example, donated more than 760 books to the alcove (*maqṣūra*) of the Ḥanafīs in the Umayyad Mosque: 140 volumes of Qurʾānic studies, 19 collections of *ḥadīth*, 39 books of *fiqh*, 143 Arabic books, 122 anthologies of poetry, 175 treatises on grammar and syntax and 123 books on medicine and other sciences of the 'ancients' (*ʿulūm al-awāʾil*).[84] Al-Qāḍī al-Ashraf ibn al-Faḍl, a devoted traditionist and collector of manuscripts, "made a *waqf* of some fine manuscripts for students of *ḥadīth* in the two *maqṣūra*s

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[79] Buckley, *The Book*, 120. Ibn Jubayr observes that "in these eastern countries children are taught the Qurʾān solely by memorizing and repetition" (Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 272), and his countryman Abū Bakr Ibn ʿArabī (d. 543/1148) deplores the fact that young children are made to memorize God's book which they do not understand (quoted by Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 538; trans. in *Ibn Khaldūn, The Muqaddima*, 3: 303). See also Giladi, *Children*, 55–56.

[80] See Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 165–189; Giladi, "Gender Differences"; Roded, *Women*, 70–72.

[81] Berkey, *Transmission*, 21, 24; Ephrat, *Learned Society*, 79–85.

[82] Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 138–141.

[83] See Berkey, *Transmission*, 24–25.

[84] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 98; Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 110; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 9:4002–4013. On the donation of books to the *jāmiʿ*, see Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:982; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 136. On mosque libraries in Syria, see Sibai, *Mosque Libraries*, 70–72; Eché, *Bibliotheques arabes*, 132, 202–208. See also al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 1:196, on the library of the Umayyad Mosque in the early Mamlūk period.

known by his and his father's names in al-Kallāsa, in the congregational mosque of Damascus [i.e. at the northern side of the building]."[85] Earlier, Nūr al-Dīn gave away a copy of Bayhaqī's *Shuʿab al-Imān* (*Springs of Faith*), produced especially for him by a hapless copyist, to yet another alcove of the same mosque.[86]

One could approach scholars who happened to be in the mosque, or who habitually sat in the mosque, such as Fakhr al-Dīn Abū Manṣūr ibn ʿAsākir of Damascus,[87] to ask questions and obtain *fatwā*s. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī was approached by many people who had jotted down notes with questions for him at the end of an assembly of exhortation he had conducted in the congregational mosque of Ḥarrān, in 613/1216. Reluctant to answer—perhaps he was tired, or in awe of all those Ḥanbalīs whose *madhhab* he had forsaken—he asked the people to wait for their own shaykh.[88] Another vivid scene of *istiftāʾ* in a mosque is captured by Ibn al-ʿAdīm in his *Bughyat al-Ṭalab*. A *mamlūk* ("*rajul turkī min atrāk al-Madīna*") came into the mosque of Medina and approached one of the Ṣūfīs who were sitting there, to ask for a *fatwā*. The Ṣūfī pointed to the Syrian Shaykh Rabīʿ al-Mardīnī (d. 601/1205) who was also present, saying: "*huwa ʿalā madhhabika*," i.e. a Ḥanafī. The man inquired whether he could marry a Zaydī woman whose husband had abandoned her, or disappeared ("*sāfara ʿanhā, aw ghāba*"). Rabīʿ al-Mardīnī quoted the *Mukhtaṣar* of al-Qudūrī—an early eleventh-century compilation of Ḥanafī law—stating that a deserted wife must wait until 120 years elapse from the birth of her husband before she may remarry. The man resigned himself to this harsh ruling. After his departure, al-Mardīnī felt deep remorse, realizing that in truth he was neither a *muftī* nor a qualified *faqīh*, and should have kept silent.[89]

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[85] Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 32, trans. of Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:982.
[86] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7:3099–3100.
[87] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 37.
[88] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 93. On Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, see 4.3, below.
[89] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *al-Bughya*, 8:3595–96. For the medieval debate regarding the qualifications of *muftī*s and the relationship between the *mustaftī* and *muftī*, see Masud *et al*., "Muftīs," 17–52; Hallaq, *A History*, 145–146. Whether al-Mardīnī was conscious of all the learned reasoning on this matter is unclear; however, the allusion to his remorse ties in with the contemporaneous discourse of piety, which makes much of scrupulousness in the issuing of *fatwā*s.

2.4. *Ṣūfīs and Ascetic Recluses* (zuhhād)[90]

Iʿtikāf, 'staying' in the mosque, was not an exclusively Ṣūfī custom: al-Nawawī, who calls it a virtuous deed (*faḍīla*), recommends the spread of the practice to all, including children and common people (*al-ṣighār wa-l-ʿawāmm*).[91]According to Ibn Jubayr, ascetics who devoted themselves to God occupied each one of the three minarets of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Al-Harawī confirms this information a decade or two later, and goes on to mention two famous men who had chosen the Damascene mosque as their refuge from the hustle of this world in earlier generations: al-Ghazzālī (d. 555/1111) and Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130).[92] Apparently, the western *zāwiya* of the mosque was known to Damascenes by the names of the ascetics who had made it their home. In Abū Shāma's days it was called after Bayram al-Mardīnī (d. 627/1230), a vegetarian shaykh who willingly endured loneliness, poverty and hunger within its walls. Earlier, it was named after other ascetics: Zāwiyat al-Dawlaʿī, Zāwiyat al-Nīsābūrī, Zāwiyat Naṣr al-Maqdisī.[93]

There are many examples of ascetics who dwelled in the minarets of great mosques, especially in cities known for their sanctity (such as Jerusalem, Damascus and of course Mecca) but also in the alcoves of neighborhood mosques, or in more isolated rural mosques.[94] The terms used to denote retirement to mosques include *iʿtikāf, inqiṭāʿ, iqāma bi-l-masjid, tark al-khalāʾiq* (renouncing all created things), *lazm al-ʿibāda* (devotion to worship), and *khalwa* (solitude). Some of the names of those mosque dwellers indicate their distant geographical origins (al-Fāsī, al-Maghribī, al-ʿAjamī, al-Daylamī), or, in Ibn Jubayr words: "men of virtue from among the strangers (*aqwām min al-ghurabāʾ, ahl al-khayr*)." There were also men who chose to retire to a nearby mosque. They came from socially diversified

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[90] On the interchangeable usage of those terms, and the difficulty of establishing clear identifications, see Eddé, *Alep*, 422.

[91] Al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyān*, 37–38.

[92] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 266; Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 34–35.

[93] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 159. For a longer biography of Bayram, see Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 8:3591–3603. For *mujāwwirūn* in the great mosque of Damascus in 758/1357, see Winter, "Religious Life," 224.

[94] Interestingly, the village (as opposed to the city) is depicted as a safe haven for the man who wishes to devote himself to God, but mistrusts his carnal soul. See al-Shahrazūrī, *Fatāwā*, 30; al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 167.

backgrounds, if we may judge from their epithets, including scholars, Ṣūfīs, experts on *ḥadīth, ashrāf* (honorary title of descendants of the Prophet), jurisconsults and artisans.[95]

A few examples may convey a better sense of this phenomenon. Shaykh Ghānim b. ʿAlī al-Maqdisī, a native of Nāblus, retired to the Dome of the Rock shortly after its re-conquest by Saladin. He took that step after having underwent a process of 'repentance' (*tawba*), following his recovery from an illness that took the lives of many of his friends. Finally, he fully converted to the ascetic life. A mysterious shaykh had helped him to realize his earlier decision to retire to a mosque by miraculously removing the love of this world from his heart, as if he had "removed a lump of fresh dough from a saucer." Consequently, al-Maqdisī spent six years in the Dome of Rock.[96] Ismāʿīl b. al-Kurānī al-Kurdī (d. 644/1246) secluded himself in the mosque of Bāb al-Arbaʿīn in Aleppo. For a long period of time he abstained from contact with the rulers and dignitaries of the city. If he were obliged to talk to them, he would employ coarse language and behave in an offensive manner.[97] The earlier Muḥammad al-Samāʿ (d. 570/1175) used to leave his cell, adjacent to the mosque of al-Khaḍir in Ḥisn Kayfā, only for communal prayers. After his death, his cell was occupied by his shaykh, Muḥammad al-Bustī, who had miraculously arrived in time to wash his body. They all gained the reputation of holy men (*awliyā*ʾ).[98] Shaykh Abū Zakariyyāʾ Yaḥyā b. Manṣūr (d. c. 600/1203–4), who had spent many years in the mosque of Dayr Samʿān (or Dayr Naqīra), in proximity to the tomb of the righteous Umayyad caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, was also held in high regard. Saladin paid him a visit once, and was rewarded—according to Abū Shāma's understanding—with double blessings, that of the dead caliph and that of the living saint.[99] Saladin is said to have also visited the Ḥarrānī Shaykh Ḥayāt (d. 581/1185), who dwelled in a

[95] See Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 62, 168, 183, 187, 189, 198, 210; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:462, 468, 3:276, 6:2908, 10:4347; Ibn Munqidh, *al-Iʿtibār*, 92, 171; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:203. And see Eddé, *Alep*, 419–420.

[96] Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 3: 60–61. The shaykh employed hand-contact and the recitation of the Qurʾānic verse 79:40.

[97] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:1018, 4:1718.

[98] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, 186; trans. in Hitti, *Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, 203.

[99] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:173–174; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:468. See also *ibid*., 8:3601; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 2:270; Eddé, *Alep*, 419.

zāwiya adjacent to the local mosque, to ask for his blessing before undertaking an attack on Mosul.[100] Ibn Jubayr mentions the *zāwiya*, adding that the shaykh had built it himself, in that "city of ascetic saints…[and] unworldly anchorites."[101]

Upon the arrival of the ascetic ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Fāsī at the mosque of the village of al-Fīn, northeast of Aleppo, he took an oath never to leave the place. Some thirteen years later, around 613/1216–7, he broke his oath and went out to meet his beloved colleague Shaykh Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Asadī, whom he had not seen for twenty years (a period spent by al-Asadī in the mosques of Mecca). Despite this display of human frailty, al-Fāsī was greatly admired by Allepans of all classes, and was generally known as one of "the friends of God (*awliyāʾ Allāh*)." Ibn al-ʿAdīm reports that he was summoned to the citadel with a few other *zuhhād* to pray for the recovery of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir during the sultan's illness. On a more personal note Ibn al-ʿAdīm tells us that one of his father's last wishes was to hold the rosary (*masbaḥa*) of Shaykh al-Fāsī in his hands.[102]

It is interesting to note that some ascetics alternated between periods of seclusion in mosques and in *khānqāh*s or *zāwiya*s—that is, in lodges especially designated for Ṣūfīs.[103] For example: Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Maqdisī al-Ṣūfī (d. 639/1241), described as one of *ahl al-ḥadīth wa-l-taṣawwuf* (the people of *ḥadīth* and Sufism), dwelt for a while in the mosque of al-Aqṣā. Forced to leave Jerusalem in 616/1219 because of the dismantlement of its fortifications, he relocated to Aleppo and settled in *Khānqāh* Sunqurjāh).[104] Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Kawāshī divided his time between the Masjid Banū al-ʿAdīm in Aleppo, and a Ṣūfī home (*duwayrat al-ṣūfiyya*) in Mosul. The latter was part of the complex of the great mosque of Mosul.[105] So was the *zāwiya* built by Aḥmad b. Hibat Allāh, Ibn al-ʿAdīm's father, for the ascetic Rabīʿ al-Mardīnī, adjacent

[100] He did not heed the advice of the shaykh, however, and launched a failed expedition (Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 49:104). See Rice, "A Muslim Shrine," 440, for a translation, and for the historical background.

[101] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 245. See translation and discussion, in Rice, "A Muslim Shrine," 439.

[102] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:923, 3:1213, 8:3591; idem, *Zubda*, 3:147.

[103] On Ṣūfī institutions and the terms denoting them, see Lev, *Charity*, 104–112; Eddé, *Alep*, 425–427.

[104] Founded 554/1159 (for details, see Eddé, *Alep*, 370). On the combination of *ḥadīth* and *taṣawwuf*, see ch. 7.3.

[105] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 95, 195; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:969, 3:1262.

to the mosque named after the Banū al-ʿAdīm, and located next to their house. Hibat Allāh is said to have paid a debt of gratitude to al-Mardīnī: the shaykh's successful prayer on his behalf released him from the office of *qāḍī al-quḍāt*, thus enabling him to leave Aleppo for the *ḥajj*.[106]

The motivations and aims of seclusion in the precincts of mosques may have been different from those of retirement to Ṣūfī homes, of which, admittedly, we know little preceding the Mamlūk period.[107] Ṣūfī homes offered the company of other Ṣūfīs or wayfarers, and provisions.[108] They were supported by *waqf*s, some of them by lavish endowments that allowed for carefree lives of luxury (at least by the standards of certain contemporary authors).[109] Other *khānqāh*s, perhaps especially those that were located in former private homes (Ibn Shaddād mentions that five of the thirty one *khānqāh*s and *ribāṭ*s of Aleppo were located in private homes),[110] must have been rather modest. Judging from the *waqfiyya* of the Khānqāh al-Ṣāliḥiyya in Jerusalem, at this stage, the student group was heterogeneous with respect to age, marital status and ethnic origins, rather than restricted to the adherents of a particular Ṣūfī order or method.[111] Yet rituals such as prayer, recitation of Qurʾān, *dhikr*, the study of Ṣūfī texts, and supplication on behalf of the founder, were carried out communally.[112] *Khānqāh*s were supposedly supervised by the local *shaykh al-shuyūkh*, who was also responsible for guarding the rights of the residents, and there may also have been some spiritual guidance from

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[106] Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 100, 41. A secondary cause of his dismissal was, admittedly, Saladin's policy of sending away Ḥanafīs, and appointing Shāfiʿīs to the prestigious offices in Aleppo.

[107] Lev, who summarizes scholarship on his issue, offers detailed information only about Mamlūk and Ottoman institutions (Lev, *Charity*, 115–118). Tabbaa finds some information in inscriptions on Ṣūfī homes (see Tabbaa, *Constructions*, 174–180).

[108] On the social function of *khānqāh*s and *ribāṭ*s as asylums for the poor and solitary (especially for women), see Eddé, *Alep*, 428–429; Homerin, "Saving Muslim Souls," 62.

[109] Ibn Jubayr provides a famous passage describing Ṣūfī homes reminiscent of "the palaces of Paradise," where life is peaceful and comfortable (Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 284; trans. in Broadhurst, *Travels*, 297). See also Eddé, *Alep*, 427; Homerin, "Saving Muslim Souls," 63, 69.

[110] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:233–238. See also Eddé, Alep, 429. In Damascus, Saladin had his own house transformed into a *khānqāh* (Korn, "Structure," 79).

[111] Pahlitzsch, "Transformation," 61. The document was signed on Ramaḍān 5th, 585/1189.

[112] Pahlitzsch, "Transformation," 62.

a resident Ṣūfī shaykh. *Iʿtikāf* in a mosque might have been more of an individual endeavor, which most likely entailed dependence on the hospitality and generosity of local communities. Some of the ascetics who chose to dedicate their time to seclusion and spiritual training in mosques may have been reluctant to enjoy the relative comforts of an established Ṣūfī home, as well as the endowments of rulers, and preferred a more frugal way of life.[113] Shaykh Muḥammad al-Bustī, who resided for some time in a cell adjacent to the mosque of Ḥisn Kayfa, and subsisted, according to his neighbor, the famous Usāma ibn al-Munqidh of Shayzar, on an extremely frugal diet of fruit, refused to exchange his cell for one built especially for him by a notable from Ḥisn Kayfa, in the midst of his private garden.[114]

Retreat to a mosque was more frugal, perhaps, but not necessarily lonely. In some mosques, a Ṣūfī could find a whole group of wayfarers like himself. The Persian traveler Nāṣir-i Khusraw notes in the diary of his journey through Syria and Palestine (written in 439/1047), that along the northern wall of al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem there are two cloisters with "a fine prayer niche" that Ṣūfīs used for residence and daily prayers. On Fridays they attended the communal prayer inside the Ḥaram.[115] Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī al-Andalusī, who stayed in the city from 486/1093 until 488/1095, met some of those Ṣūfīs. He mentions by name the Jerusalemite Abū al-Faḍl ʿAṭāʾ al-Maqdisī, "the eldest shaykh from among scholars and Ṣūfīs (*al-fuqahāʾ wa-l-fuqarāʾ*) in al-Aqṣā mosque," who was one of the most devout Ṣūfīs he met in Jerusalem.[116] Another elderly ascetic who stood at the center of a group of Ṣūfīs that resided in a mosque was Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Waḥīd al-Mudarwwiz al-ʿAjamī (or al-Zanbīl). He and his "group of righteous Ṣūfīs (*jamāʿa min al-fuqarāʾ al-ṣāliḥīn*)" made the mosque of al-Sayyida al-ʿAlawiyya in Aleppo their home, and the location of their *samāʿ* (ecstatic dance). The shaykh would beg for food for them all, and treat them to one meal a day, and—when in the right mood—to stories about the wondrous doing (*karāmāt*) of

[113] Ṣadr al-Dīn b. Ḥamawayhi (d. 617/1220) refused to eat or drink anything furnished by a *waqf* of a *khānqāh*, not even water from its cistern (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 10:4396; Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 119).

[114] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*; 186–187; trans. in Hitti, *Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, 204.

[115] Nāṣir-i Khusraw, in Le Strange, *Palestine*, 176–177 (I owe this reference to D. Ephrat).

[116] Drory, *Ibn al-ʿArabī*, 81–82.

saintly men.[117] The Ṣūfī company of Shaykh Raslān b. Yaʿqūb al-Jaʿbarī (d. 540/1145–6) moved from one mosque to another in Damascus: after some time at the mosque of Bāb Tūma they relocated to the mosque of Darb al-Ḥajar, and then to the mosque of al-Khālid ibn al-Walīd.[118] Dhahabī admits with regret that he could not complete the shaykh's biography properly, because he failed to collect more information about him. As a consequence, we are left to wonder about the reasons for Shaykh Raslān's restiveness. Perhaps regular mosque-goers were intolerant to the activities of the Ṣūfī group and forced them to leave. Such was the case in the great mosques of Cairo and Mosul, when Shaykh Ruzbīhān (or Ruzbīhār) al-Kazarūnī al-Daylamī (d. 578/1191) performed *samāʿ* with his disciples, who used to accompany their singing with the clapping of hands. Al-Kazarūnī, who is described as given to passionate love and ecstatic behavior, frightened and bewildered the people who came to attend communal prayers with his rapturous cries. In the Mosque of ʿAmru b. al-ʿĀṣ in Cairo, he was beaten for crying out loud suddenly during the Friday sermon. The religious scholars of Mosul decided that Ruzbīhān's manner contradicted the *sharīʿa* and their own ways, and expelled him from the mosque. He relocated to another mosque, away from the city, where he may have been accepted thanks to the Ṣūfī inclinations of his hosts, or on account of a more tolerant spirit that might have characterized peripheral communities.[119] A third interesting, but likewise enigmatic story about a Ṣūfī group that settled in a mosque is that of Shaykh Abū Bakr al-Badlīsī's disciples at the northern village of Turaydam. Subkī (d. 771/1369) explains, in his biographical dictionary of Shāfiʿī scholars, that one of them, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-Naḥḥās, initiated the construction of a second mosque in the village because the existing mosque became too small for the whole congregation. While it seems likely that the number of the local devotees was inflated by the arrival of the Ṣūfīs, the shaykh

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[117] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:1118.

[118] Dhahabī, *al-ʿIbar*, 4:145; *idem, Siyar*, 20:380; Pouzet, *Damas*, 208.

[119] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 8:3719–3722. See also the case of al-Wazzān al-Miṣrī (Ibn Abī al-Manṣūr, *La Risāla*, 233; Pouzet, *Damas*, 237). It should be noted that some scholars, including Ḥanbalīs, recognized the religious merit of *samāʿ*, and likened singing to the recitation of poetry. On the contemporaneous debate in Damascus, see Pouzet, "autour du *samāʿ*"; Nelson, *The Art*, 33–51.

was displeased with the location Ibn al-Naḥḥās had suggested, and the latter, so it seems, gave up his plan.[120]

ʿAbd Allāh al-Armīnī (d. 631/1234) and other Ṣūfīs who performed *samāʿ* on the night of *al-waqfa*[121] in the Ḥaram al-Sharīf of Jerusalem came under the attack of Ibn ʿUrwa, who was known as a staunch opponent of Sufism in Jerusalem. He complained to al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam that the Ṣūfīs had desecrated the holy place with their dancing. The ruler's reaction remains unknown to us; Armīnī's biographers only report that he moved to Egypt with his family for a while.[122] His exile from Jerusalem, whether forced or voluntary, probably did not put an end to controversial Ṣūfī practices in its mosques. The Jewish traveler Rabbenu Yaʿakov, who visited Jerusalem between 1238 and 1244, describes great Muslim gatherings at the Ḥaram on their festival. "They circumambulate that place [the rock] in a dance-like manner, not at all like what Israel would do on the seventh day of their festival," he adds with disdain.[123]

This short survey of Ṣūfī presence in mosques and the reactions to it can teach us several things about trends in thirteenth-century Syrian asceticism and Sufism. Evidently, there were individualistic recluses who spent years in one place, wandering ascetics who needed asylum for the night, groups of disciples who followed their shaykh from one sanctuary to another, and the dwellers of official Ṣūfī institutions—the *khānqāh*s endowed by rulers and others. The resignation from mundane life inspired awe, admiration and contempt all at once. On the whole, ascetics and mystics were admired by scholars and commoners alike, but in some settings they drew suspicion and even outright antagonism. The presence of pious *muʿtakifūn* in congregational mosques, neighborhood mosques and rural mosques, rather than in separate institutions designed especially for Ṣūfīs, undoubtedly had an effect on the general 'religious climate' and on the education of commoners. Al-Ghazzālī believed that the constant company of righteous believers could strengthen the religious devotion of commoners, no less than the more conventional prescriptions of Qur'ān recitation, the study

[120] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:413; Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:392, Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 5: 295–296.

[121] That is, after the day of ʿArafāt. On the performance of *wuqūf* ceremonies in Jerusalem (tenth-fourteenth centuries), see Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 61–62.

[122] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, 8:690; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 136.

[123] Jacob the Messenger, "*Elleh ha-Masaʿot*," 149.

of *ḥadīth* and the observance of religious obligations.[124] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī recalls the impression that a Ṣūfī shaykh, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār Abū Muḥammad al-Ṭāʾī, known as al-Badawī, made on him when he was a little boy. Having seen him on Fridays in the great mosque of Damascus, he was sure that the man prayed for the entire day "so as not to miss the hour of the public prayer." Moreover, al-Badawī used to preach against dancing and against the company of dancers, of whom he said: "These are people who neglect the Qurʾān and busy themselves with nonsense."[125]

[124] Giladi, "Renewal of religion," 22.
[125] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 98a; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 150.

CHAPTER THREE

PREACHERS (*KHAṬĪBS*) AND PRAYER LEADERS (*IMĀMS*)

"Saladin always sought out Fridays for his battles, especially the times of Friday prayer," claims Bahāʾ al-Dīn ibn Shaddād, the sultan's devoted companion and biographer, and goes on to explain why: "to gain the blessing of the preachers' prayers on the pulpits, for they were perhaps more likely to be answered."[1] Towards the end of the biography, describing Saladin's final hours, Bahāʾ al-Dīn mentions that on Ṣafar 27 589/March 3 1193, the twelfth day of Saladin's fatal illness, a prayer leader was called to his bed. Shaykh Abū Jaʿfar al-Qurṭubī (d. 596/1200), the *imām* of the Kallāsa mosque, and "a man of piety," came, in Bahāʾ al-Dīn's words, "to spend the night in the citadel, so that, if death throes began during the night, he would be with the sultan, keep the women away from him, rehearse his confession of faith and keep God before his mind." Shaykh Abū Jaʿfar recited the Qurʾān beside Saladin, "and called God to his remembrance" until his last breath. Thus, the shaykh facilitated the sultan's 'beautiful death': unconscious as he was, upon hearing the words of verse 22 of *sūrat al-ḥashar* (59)—"He is God, other than He there is none, Knower of the invisible (*ghayb*) and the visible (*shahada*). He is the Beneficent, the Merciful"—Saladin opened his eyes and said 'amen'.[2]

Possibly, Bahāʾ al-Dīn ibn Shaddād is telling us that preachers (*khaṭībs*) and prayer leaders (*imāms*) could, according to the perception of Saladin (and his men), bestow blessing because of their formal position. Perhaps the *baraka* was attributed to them on account of their personal virtues of piety, learning or charisma, or else, because the *khaṭīb* and *imām* (often the same person) were held to represent the whole praying community, and the intercessional power of the

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[1] Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 72. Saladin also acknowledged a similar dependence on intercessory prayers (*duʿāʾ*)—those of the jurists and ascetic and al-Khabūshānī (see Lev, "Piety and Politics," 305).

[2] Ibn Shaddad, *Sīrat al-Sulṭān*, 152; trans. in Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 243. The other "*imām* of Saladin" mentioned in our sources is Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Amalī (d. 598/1201–2), see Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 50:481; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 47–48.

multitude of Muslims. This section is devoted to the personnel of the mosque, and seeks to find out whether *khaṭībs* and *imām*s did indeed enjoy moral authority in the eyes of medieval Syrian Muslims, and in what ways they exercised that authority. It opens with a presentation of the *khaṭāba* according to legal and administrative literature, and goes on to sketch the profiles of preachers who served in Zangid and Ayyūbid congregational mosques, namely, their social and educational backgrounds, the functions they performed, the social status they gained with the nomination, the relationships they established with rulers and congregations, the messages they propagated, and the strategies of preaching they employed. The final section deals with *imām*s: their social and religious status, rights and obligations, and their rapport with the praying-congregation.

3.1. *Friday Preaching (khaṭāba)*

Ideally—that is, in the early Muslim state as constructed in Islamic collective memory—the Friday-noon sermon (*khuṭba*) was the duty and prerogative of the caliph. Over time, it was delegated to the *ʿulamāʾ*. Hārūn al-Rashīd (170/786–193/809) is said to have been the first caliph who did not prepare sermons himself: he ordered written sermons from religious scholars and memorized them. During the course of the third/ninth century, most caliphs and local rulers refrained from delivering the sermons themselves altogether, and committed the task to the charge of professional preachers. Latter-day Muslim rulers mounted the pulpit only on rare festive occasions, if at all.[3] Once the caliph no longer preached himself, great importance was attached to the mention of his name in the *khuṭba*—a symbolic expression of the fidelity of his subordinates, and one of the two standard tokens of sovereignty (the other being the *sikka*—the privilege of minting coins).[4]

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[3] The Fāṭimids, who wished to emphasize the ecclesiastical aspect of their caliphate, are an exception. They used to preach themselves, behind a veil, on Fridays of Ramaḍān and on the festivals (Mez, *Renaissance*, 317–319; Pedersen, "Khaṭīb," 1110).

[4] When al-Malik al-Ashraf became the effective ruler of Northern Syria in 615/1218, he was explicitly granted the privilege of being mentioned second in the Friday sermon; after the sultan al-Kāmil (then head of the Ayyūbid federation), and before the titular prince of the city—al-Malik al-ʿAzīz (Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 106).

The sermon was supposed to be brief, in accordance with the Prophet's recommendation to pray much but preach little.[5] It was always delivered in a standing position, and composed of several formal elements, presented in a strict order. It was divided into two parts by a short pause. The actual sermonizing (*maw'iẓa*), traditionally devoted to warnings of the Last Day and a call to exhibit piety every day, was always preceded by the *ḥamdallāh* (words of praise for the Lord) and the *ṣalāt* (blessing) invoked upon the Prophet and his family. It was followed by a special supplication (*du'ā'*) on behalf of the community of the faithful and the reigning sovereign. The sermon always concluded with a recitation of verses from the Qur'ān.[6]

Major events, such as the proclamation or deposition of a ruler, the nomination of an heir to the throne, the outbreak or termination of hostilities, a victory of Muslim forces—were effectively made known through the *khuṭba*.[7] When Muslim forces were out in the battlefields, an invocation for their victory usually supplemented the sermon. A rare extant example of such an invocation is the following late eleventh-century text: "O God, raise the banner of Islam and its helpers and refute polytheism by wounding its back and cutting its ropes. Help those who fight the *jihād* for your sake and who, in obedience to you, sacrificed themselves and sold their souls to you."[8]

The authority of the *khaṭīb* was symbolized by a short spear or sword he carried with him to the pulpit (*minbar*), by the *minbar* itself—which was associated with a royal throne in the early Islamic period,[9] and by the black attire preachers usually wore.[10] "He came

[5] Mez, *Renaissance*, 319. In a similar vein, the following 'prophecy' predicts the downhill course of civilization: "there will be a time one day in which the *fuqahā'* are few and the *qurrā'* numerous, a time in which the literal text of the Qur'ān is learnt by heart and its ordinances are lost, a time in which there are many beggars but few who give, a time in which the *khuṭba* is prolonged but the *ṣalāt* is shortened..." (Juynboll, "Qur'ān Recitation," 251).

[6] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:173–181; Swartz, "Rules," 227–228.

[7] Lewis, "Propaganda," 8–9.

[8] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 165. See also the *du'ā'* of Ibn Nubāta (d. 374/984) for the victory of the Ḥamdānid Sayf al-Dawla (trans. in Mez, *Renaissance*, 320), and his fiery exhortation on *jihād* on the Byzantine frontier (*ibid*., 323–25).

[9] Tabbaa, "Monuments," 230–231.

[10] Black was apparently the norm—Ibn Jubayr mentions black attire for the *khaṭībs* of Cairo and Mecca (Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 50, 96). Al-Ghazzālī and 'Izz al-Dīn al-Sulamī were opposed to black and preferred white (al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā'*, 1:240; al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 489). The Ḥanbalī *khaṭīb* Abū 'Umar, known for his asceticism, is said to have mounted the pulpit dressed "like a Ṣūfī"—with a shabby mantle of

to the *khuṭba* dressed in black according to the ʿAbbāsid usage," writes Ibn Jubayr in his travelogue in Dhū al-Ḥijja 578/ March-April 1183, after a visit to one of the congregational mosques of Cairo, capturing all the pomp and ceremonial which made the *khuṭba* an awe-inspiring event, not just a speech or admonition. "His costume was a black *burda* (outer garment) topped by a *ṭaylasān* of fine black cloth…and he was girded with a sword. When he had ascended the pulpit, at the first step, he struck it with the end of his scabbard a blow which those present heard as it were a call to silence. He did it again when halfway up, and a third time at the end of his climb. He then saluted the congregation right and left, while standing between two black, white checkered banners, that were planted at the top of the pulpit."[11]

The *khatīb* of the central mosque was the highest and best-paid religious functionary in medieval Syrian towns, besides the *qāḍī*. Both were designated by an official decree (*tawqīʿ*) from the ruler,[12] who tended to nominate candidates who adhered to his school of law. Ḥanafīs were appointed as *khaṭībs* under Nūr al-Dīn, (and later under the Mamlūks), whereas under the Ayyūbids almost all *khaṭībs* were Shāfiʿīs. When Saladin took over Aleppo (579/1183), the religious posts in the city, including that of Friday preaching, were transferred "along the lines of school of law, from the Ḥanafīyya to the Shāfiʿiyya (*intaqalat al-manāṣib al-dīniyya bi-ḥukm al-madhhab min al-ḥanafiyya ilā al-shāfʿiyya*).[13] In the days of al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam, who chose to turn away from the Shāfiʿī school traditional to his dynasty, and embraced the Ḥanafiyya with zeal ("*kāna shadīd al-taʿaṣṣub li-madhhabihi*"), Ḥanafīs gained the upper hand again. Al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā nominated Ḥanafī *khaṭībs* and *imāms* and

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rough cotton and a stick in his hand (Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 74). See section 7.3 below, on the proximity between Ḥanbalīs and Ṣūfīs.

[11] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 50; trans. in Broadhurst, *Travels*, 43.

[12] On both posts, see Pouzet, *Damas*, 107–136. On salaries in thirteenth century Aleppo, see Eddé, *Alep*, 557. It is hard to determine which office was more prestigious; we have a clue that may be interpreted in either way: in the curriculum vitae of most Damascenes who held both posts, the appointment to the judgeship probably predated the *khaṭāba* (for examples, see Pouzet, *Damas*, 133; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 188; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq*, 53–54).

[13] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 3:1211.

reinstalled the Ḥanafī call for prayer in Jerusalem.[14] Ḥanbalīs and Mālikīs were hardly ever appointed as *khaṭīb*s in the great mosques of Damascus and Aleppo, unless they had previously converted to the *madhhab* of their rulers.[15]

3.2. *Profiles of Khaṭībs*

Most preachers of Friday sermons belonged to a small number of local well-established elite families, whose members held the post (along with other high-ranking posts) for several successive generations, though not always in the sequence of father-son-grandson.[16] Such was the family of Faḍl Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, who, despite his young age, became *khaṭīb* of the great mosque of Damascus after his grandfather's death in 546/1151–2. His great-great-grandfather had been a *khaṭīb* as well, while some other members of the family served as officials in the Būrid administration.[17] In Aleppo, prior to Saladin's take over, the Ḥanafī Banū al-ʿAdīm supplied preachers for the great mosque; afterwards—the Shāfiʿī Banū al-Hāshim al-Asadī (who had established themselves in Aleppo only in the first half of the eleventh century). Six members of the al-Asadī family preached in the great mosque of Aleppo from the first decade of the twelfth century until the Mongol occupation. Banū al-Ḥarb, another powerful Shāfiʿī family, held the *khaṭāba* in the citadel-mosque.[18] In Ḥarrān, which was home to a strong Ḥanbalī community, local families such as the Banū Taymiyya, manned the post.[19] The Shāfiʿī family of Abū al-Maʿālī held it in Bayt Abār (a village or township in the vicinity of Damascus).[20]

[14] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:211; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 133; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:647–50; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 3:495; Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 189–192; Miura, "al-Ṣāliḥiyya," 140–141.

[15] For examples, see Pouzet, "Maghrébins," 182.

[16] See Mouton, *Damas*, 369, 146; Eddé, *Alep*, 359–360.

[17] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:713, 716. See also Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 210–13. The Banū Abī al-Ḥadīd household possessed another asset—a sandal of the Prophet (see section 6.5, below).

[18] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 3:1206, 1211; Eddé, *Alep*, 362, 617.

[19] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 63:133–135; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:222.

[20] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23:299.

While to us this state of affairs may appear as sheer nepotism, medieval men had a different perspective on paternity and the job market. They believed that it was advantageous to nominate sons to posts formerly held by their fathers, because they were presumed to have inherited their talents, and were expected to feel obliged to live up to the deeds and nobility of their ancestors. From the standpoint of the sons, it was considered highly desirable to enter the professions of their fathers.[21] Goitein, a twentieth-century historian with great sympathy towards his medieval protagonists, also saw the positive side of the transmission of posts from one family member to another: he characterizes the dynasties of Egyptian Jewish communal leaders (*dayyanīm*) in Fāṭimid and Ayyūbid times as "a vigorous element of continuity."[22]

The hereditary principal was not always applied, of course. Quite a few preachers in Zangid and Ayyūbid Syria were emigrants to the locality of their mosque, some of them of rural origins. One of the preachers of al-Mizza (a suburb of Damascus) at the beginning of the thirteenth century was a native of Mayyāfāriqīn, and another arrived from Mosul.[23] In al-Khalīl (Hebron) a native of Fez served as *khatīb* and *imām*.[24] Saladin appointed an emigrant from Malaga to the pulpit of the mosque of al-Aqṣā after the reconquest of Jerusalem.[25] The ʿIraqi Ḥanbalī Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad, who had conducted his studies in Damascus in the Ḥanbalī Madrasa al-Sharqiyya, served as an *imām* in Aleppo, and later became a preacher in the village of Tall ʿAran (or Aʿran), east of the city. The Damascene scholar Nāṣiḥ al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥanbalī met Abū al-ʿAbbās in Aleppo in 603/1206–7, and dedicated an entry in his dictionary of righteous men, *al-Istiʿbād bi-Man luqqiba min Ṣāliḥī al-ʿUbbād* (a work known to us only through Ibn al-ʿAdīm's quotations) to him. He describes the man as righteous and well-versed in Qurʾān, *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth*.[26] It may well be that emigrants were nominated to the post so often because they were expected to uphold closer ties with their patron.

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[21] Mottahede, *The Mantle*, 101–103; Marlow, *Hierarchy*, 156. But see also, the son of the *faqīh* who preferred to become a Ṣūfī disciple rather than take his father's place as *mudarris* (Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:410).
[22] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:320.
[23] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 63:333, 67:114.
[24] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 63:394.
[25] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 61:183.
[26] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 3:1297–8.

Some emigrant *khaṭīb*s went on to establish 'dynasties' of preachers themselves. Two nephews and one grandnephew of ʿAbd al-Mālik b. Zayd al-Dawlaʿi (d. 598/1201), who came to Damascus from the village of Dawlaʿiyya (in the vicinity of Mosul), served as preachers in its great mosque.[27] The Ḥanbalī Shaykh Abū ʿUmar b. Aḥmad ibn Qudāma, a native of the Palestinian village of Jammāʿīl, was the first preacher in the new congregational mosque of Mt. Qāsyūn. After his death, he was replaced by one of his sons, then by another.[28] At the same time, some Syrian scholars became *khaṭīb*s away from home. The polymath ʿAlī al-Harawī preached in the mosques of Baghdad for a while. He established a special relationship with the caliph al-Nāṣir (r. 575/1180–622/1225), and returned to Syria with an official appointment as *khaṭīb* of the great mosque of Aleppo, a symbolic token of al-Nāṣir's expectation that al-Harawī promote his influence and political aspirations in Syria. The two seem to have shared Shīʿī inclinations, or perhaps an ecumenical vision of Islam.[29] Half a century later, Syrian refugees who fled from the Mongols became *khaṭīb*s in Cairo.[30]

In rural mosques, the preachers were often locals who had left their villages in pursuit of knowledge, and later returned to them. Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (d. 643/1245) writes: "My grandfather, Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Qudāma [d. 558/1163], may he rest in peace, traveled to acquire religious knowledge (*ʿilm*) and then came back to Jammāʿīl and settled there. The people benefited from his recitation of the Qurʾān, and from his knowledge. He used to preach on Fridays to people who had assembled from several villages, and recite *ḥadīth* to them."[31]

In twelfth-thirteenth century Damascus the employment period of a *khaṭīb* lasted somewhere between one month up to thirty-seven

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[27] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 109–110, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:511.

[28] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 71, 74.

[29] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 3:224; Eddé, *Alep*, 443–44; and Sourdel-Thomine, "Le chaykh ʿAlī al-Harawī," 251–52, where al-Harawī is defined as a "crypto-Shīʿite." Humphreys describes the caliph al-Nāṣir as "a real diplomatic force in Mesopotamia" (*From Saladin*, 89), a position recognized by all political forces in Syria as well, despite the caliph's unpopularity among local *ʿulamāʾ* (*ibid*., 138).

[30] ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Abyaḍ (d. 665/1266–7) and Majd al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-ʿAdīm (d. 677/1278), see Eddé, *Alep*, 366, 369; Vadet, "Les idées," 63–69.

[31] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 1:68.

years,[32] until death or dismissal. The latter could occur on the occasion of a change of government, especially if that also involved the replacement of the dominant school of law by another. In some cases (few in number as far as I can judge), preachers were dismissed from their jobs if mistrusted by the ruler, found openly criticizing ruling authorities,[33] or if other *ʿulamāʾ* complained that they were incompetent. In 645/1247, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb suspected several of the dignitaries of Damascus, amongst them the *khaṭīb*, of disloyalty and allegiance to his adversary, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl. They were banished from the city, and, needless to say, lost their jobs.[34] Shams al-Dīn Yūnus, the son of Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dawlaʿī, *khaṭīb* of the great mosque of Damascus, substituted for his father, who was away on a diplomatic mission. When the *qāḍī* and some other dignitaries of Damascus claimed that he did not have the proper qualifications (*ahliyya*), Shams al-Dīn had to resign.[35] The preacher who was appointed to replace him until the return of the elder al-Dawlaʿī, Muwaffaq al-Dīn ʿUmar b. Yūnus (formerly *khaṭīb* of the village of Bayt Abār), took no risks. According to the biographer Abū Shāma, Muwaffaq al-Dīn used to prepare his sermon meticulously, repeating it over and over again, at home, at his *madrasa*, and all Friday morning at the *bayt al-khaṭāba* of the mosque.[36] When Muḥammad al-Dawlaʿī himself fell from grace at some point during al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam's rule, he was so worried that he might lose his *manṣib* (position) in the mosque that he did not dare leave Damascus, not even for the *ḥajj*. Or, at least, so we hear from somewhat malicious sources.[37]

Since preaching on Fridays was not a full-time job, almost every *khaṭīb* busied himself with other occupations during his term of appointment. Some pursued their scholarly work. The *khaṭīb* of Dārayyā (a large village in the vicinity of Damascus), Abū Bakr al-Wahrānī

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[32] Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dawlaʿī remained in office for 37 years, until his death in 637/1239. He was also an endower and a professor of a *madrasa*, even though Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī declares that he was so ignorant in *fiqh* that al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam banned him from issuing *fatwā*s (Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 443, n. 39).

[33] See the case of ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī, below.

[34] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:766–7.

[35] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 110.

[36] Located behind the central *miḥrāb* (Mouton, *Damas*, 368); Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 110.

[37] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23:25; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:710.

(d. 616/1219–20), for example, composed a Qurʾān exegesis and a commentary on *abyāt al-jumal* (general Qurʾānic statements, made more specific by a *ḥadīth*).[38] Typical secondary occupations of *khaṭīb*s (unless the *khaṭāba* should be considered as the secondary occupation) included the posts of *imām* and *mudarris*.[39] In the course of their careers, some *khaṭīb*s held secular administrative posts, such as those of treasurer (*wakīl bayt al-māl*), helper to the vizier in fiscal matters, collector of *waqf* incomes of a *madrasa* (*jābī madrasa*), senior superintendent of the administration,[40] and even vizier.[41] ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Manṣūr b. al-Wadāʿa al-Ḥalabī (d. 666/1268) was a preacher in Jabla when he joined the entourage of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf in Aleppo, and after some time was appointed as *shadd al-dawāwīn* (superintendent of the bureaus) of Damascus and its province. He was well respected and very close to his patron, whom he survived. Under Baybars his fortunes were reversed: his Shīʿī inclinations made him a target of abuse by a senior member of the new administration.[42]

Due to their prestigious position, or due to their intimacy with rulers, *khaṭīb*s were often sent out on official diplomatic missions. In 570/1174, Shams al-Dīn ibn al-Wazīr temporarily quit his Friday-preaching in Damascus and left for Baghdad, in order to announce there the restoration of the *khuṭba* to the ʿAbbāsid caliph in the former Faṭimid domains. He was a courier of great news: the return of Egypt to the Sunnī fold after more than two hundred years of Shīʿī rule.[43] Another *khaṭīb*, Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dawlaʿī (d. 637/1239), accompanied by the *qāḍī al-ʿaskar* Najm al-Dīn Khalīl al-Ḥanafī, was sent by al-Malik al-ʿĀdil in 615/1218 to the Khwarizmshāh at Hamadhān. Some ten years later he participated in the delegation that negotiated the termination of a particularly brutal siege on Damascus.[44] The *khaṭīb* Aṣīl al-Dīn al-Isʿirdī was sent to Damascus and

[38] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 62:415.

[39] ʿAbd Allāh b. Zayd al-Dawlāʿī, *khaṭīb* Damascus, taught at the Ghazzāliyya (Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 50:358).

[40] *Eddé, Alep*, 253–54, 363.

[41] See Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:394; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 3:1211, 1297–8, 7:3312–16; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 32, 117; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:313; Pouzet, *Damas*, 133, 157. Compare with preachers in Mamlūk Cairo, described in Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 260–262.

[42] Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:390–92.

[43] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1997, 2:357.

[44] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:593; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 109–110, 155.

Ḥimṣ by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb in 641/1243 in order to pronounce the first *khuṭba* in his name since his ascension to the position of head of the Ayyūbid federation ("*ṣāḥib al-khuṭba wa-l-sikka*").[45] Al-Isʿirdī came to Damascus once again a few years later, to receive its garrison's oath of allegiance to the new sultan in Cairo, this time al-Muʿizz Aybak al-Turkumānī, *mamlūk* of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and husband of his widow, Shajar al-Ḍurr.[46] The Shāfiʿī scholar and *khaṭīb* Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Yūsuf (d. 608/1211–12) was sent to Baghdad and to Damascus by the ruler of Mosul Nūr al-Dīn Arslān, the only Shāfiʿī prince of the Zangid family.[47]

3.3. *Khaṭīb*s *as Communal and Spiritual Leaders*

Evidently, *khaṭīb*s ranked high in the official sphere. Yet, only rarely do we hear of a *khaṭīb* who truly assumed spiritual and political leadership, such as Aḥmad ibn Qudāma, who served as *khaṭīb* of Jammāʿīl while the village was under Frankish occupation. The Frankish seigneur of Mt. Nāblus, Baldwin of Iblin (transliterated by al-Maqdisī as Ahūman b. Barizān), suspected that he was causing unrest amongst villagers with his sermons, and plotted to get rid of him. Sensing that his life was endangered, Aḥmad ibn Qudāma fled to Muslim-ruled Damascus. According to Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn's account, Aḥmad ibn Qudāma referred to his emigration as a religiously motivated *hijra*. He called on fellow-villagers to follow in his footsteps quoting verse 14:36 from the Qurʾān, where Abraham says: "*fa-man tabiʿanī fa-innahu minnī*—but who follows me, he verily is of me." One hundred and sixty five men, women and children from eight different villages of Mt. Nāblus indeed followed him: they took the risky path to Damascus and settled there collectively. After some time, upon the instructions of Aḥmad ibn Qudāma, they relocated to Mt. Qāsyūn.[48]

In later years, Aḥmad ibn Qudāma and other Ḥanbalī preachers of his clan enjoyed considerable authority in Damascus, both among their

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[45] He was recognized as such in an agreement with al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl of Cairo (Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 273).
[46] Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 305.
[47] Ibn al-Wardī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:128.
[48] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 1:68. For bibliography on different aspects of this episode, see Talmon-Heller, "Arabic Sources," 103, n. 1.

own people and well beyond the limits of their school of law. Their formal roles as prayer leaders and preachers of the Friday sermon represented only a fraction of their functions within the community. Shaykh Aḥmad's son Abū ʿUmar was a mediator: he negotiated peace in cases of inner strife, and intervened at the courts of rulers on behalf of his people.[49] Interestingly, the petitions he addressed to local governors and officials were considered to be efficient, not necessarily on account of their contents, but rather due to the *baraka* transmitted through the actual document he had handled. Likewise, the copies of the Qurʾān, and of some other religious texts he reproduced in his handwriting, were known to convey *baraka* into the homes of those who held them.[50] His repertoire included a well balanced collection of *tafsīr*, Ḥanbalī *fiqh* and dogma, and mainstream, or 'moderate' Sufism: the *Mukhtaṣar* of al-Khiraqī (d. 334/946)—the first compilation of Ḥanbalī law, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*—the popular Ṣūfī dictionary by Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038), *al-Ibāna*—a theological treatise by the Ḥanbalī Ibn Baṭṭa (d. 387/997), *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*—a Qurʾān exegesis by the Shāfiʿī Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122), and *al-Mughnī*—the book of Ḥanbalī law written by his learned brother, Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma.

Abū ʿUmar is portrayed as "a father to the community (*kāna li-l-jamāʿa ka-l-ab*)," supporting the needy, visiting the sick and burying the dead. His custom to frequently recite certain verses (the *āyāt al-ḥaras*—2:284–286, 2:256–259, 7:52–54, 16:109–111, 37:1–11, 55:33–36, 70:1–4) was held to have "kept evil away from his people in times of constant warfare, violence and crime." The shaykh extended protection to his neighbors by reciting verse 2:255 (*āyat al-kursī*) on the threshold of his house, while making a gesture with his hand towards the other houses. All in all, Shaykh Aḥmad's and Shaykh Abū ʿUmar's array of occupations call to mind the Jewish *dayyan* (communal leader) of the same period, who was in charge of the social services of the community, of its inner and outer politics, and—of preaching to it on formal and informal occasions.[51] Abū ʿUmar's better-known brother, the *faqīh* Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma, succeeded

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[49] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:7; Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Aḥwāl*, 123a.

[50] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Aḥwāl*, 122b-123b. Stephan Leder calls this combination of roles and attitudes 'charismatic scripturalism' (Leder, "Charismatic Scripturalism").

[51] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:216. On the "protective verses," see Canaan, *Decipherment*, 6

him as preacher of the congregational mosque of Mt. Qāsyūn. He was also recognized as the head of his community, venerated and obeyed by the people ("*kāna shaykh jamāʿatihi, muṭāʿan fīhim*"). He clearly regarded the solidarity of the Ḥanbalī émigré community as one of his tasks, as indicated in his confession to Nāṣiḥ al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 634/1226), whom he intended to be his successor: "I was afraid that I might die before your return [from a voyage] and that weakness and disagreement might befall our friends (*wa-yaqaʿu wahn fī-l-madhhab wa-khulf bayna aṣḥābinā*)".[52]

Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar (d. 583/1187) of the village of Salamiyya—whose formal sermons drew men and women from surrounding villages on Fridays—did not confine his sermonizing and admonishing to the pulpit of his mosque. Under his influence, sometimes exerted in an unconventional manner (as related in the hagiographical treatise *al-Ḥikāyāt al-Muqtabasa fī Karāmāt Mashāyikh al-Arḍ al-Muqaddasa*), "no wine, nor music, nor anything forbidden appeared in that village." The second item on this list, music, was eliminated from Salamiyya as a consequence of the shaykh's attack on a party of musicians, who were on their way to a nearby village to makemerry at a wedding. Having heard the distressing sounds of a tambourine and the piping of a reed on a country-road leading to the wedding, the shaykh (according to an eye-witness quoted by Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī in his treatise about the wondrous doings of the shaykh of Mt. Nāblus) omitted a cry, causing stones to roll off the mountains into the wadis. The people of the village hurried out, frightened, and the musicians fled, never to return.[53]

To the best of my knowledge, only in Ḥanbalī communities did *khaṭībs* and *imām*s hold such influential positions, and cultivate such strong bonds with the rank and file of their congregations.[54] Moreover, the scope of their activities shows that they even maintained communications between the different Ḥanbalī congregations (those of Nāblus, Jerusalem, Mt. Qāsyūn and Damascus), and with ruling

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[52] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:58, 195.

[53] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 96b; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 148–149). On the Ḥanbalī aversion to music and their ingenious methods of fighting it, see Cook, *Commanding Right*, 90–91, 148–149.

[54] For the same phenomenon in an earlier Ḥanbalī community, see: Makdisi, "Autograph Diary."

authorities.[55] Some of them ventured to reach out beyond their close circles as well. Ibn Qudāma's cousin, Shaykh ʿImād al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (d. 614/1218), with whom he rotated his duties as preacher and prayer leader in the mosque of Mt. Qāsyūn, used to spend many of his days in the great mosque of Damascus teaching Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* "to the people." His biographers tell us that "a number of Kurds, Bedouins and foreigners became his disciples," as well as a number of people from the other schools of law, who dissociated themselves from their schools and joined the Ḥanbalīs, "because of his example."[56] The Shāfiʿī preacher ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī (d. 660/1262), a scholar acclaimed for his legal authority and personal courage, must have had a great intellectual impact on Islamic scholarship (mainly through his written works).[57] His impact as a preacher seems more limited than that of his Ḥanbalī peers, however, if a preacher may be judged by the behavior of his audience: as we have seen above, his uncompromising opposition to *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* and to the rituals of *Niṣf Shaʿbān* had little effect.[58]

Al-Sulamī chose to fight for another lost cause, speaking up against the humiliating treaty al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl had signed with the Franks in 638/1240. Al-Sulamī condemned the territorial concessions promised by al-Ṣāliḥ in return for an alliance against his own (Muslim) brother, and criticized the ruler's turning a blind eye to the sale of arms to the Franks. When he went further, refusing to pray for al-Ṣāliḥ or even mention his name in the *khuṭba*, he paid a high price: he was dismissed from his job and imprisoned in the citadel of Damascus.[59] Finally, exiled from Damascus, he continued to voice his criticism from Cairo,[60] where his treatise on the laws and merits of holy war

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[55] See Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, *Aḥwāl*, 123a; Sourdel, "Deaux Documents," 150.

[56] "*wa-yalṭufu bi-l-ghurabāʾ wa-l-masākīn, ḥattā sāra min talāmīdhihi jamāʿa min al-akrād wa-l-ʿarab wa-l-ʿajam wa-kāna yatafaqqaduhum wa yasʾalu ʿanhum wa-ʿan ḥālihim, wa la-qad ṣaḥabahu jamāʿa min anwāʿ al-madhāhib fa-rajaʿū ʿan madhāhibihim li-mā shahadu minhu*" (Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:95).

[57] At least one of his works was popularized by the preacher Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, who read excerpts from it in his *majālis al-waʿẓ* (see p. 136).

[58] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 170; Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 149–150; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:209.

[59] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:243; Humphreys, *From Saladin,* 266–267; Sivan, *L'Islam,* 147–152. See also Chaumont, "Al-Sulamī," 812–813.

[60] Pouzet, *Damas,* 136; Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 266. For other examples of al-Sulamī's leadership, see Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:656; Sivan, *L'Islam*, 147–152. For a detailed biography and survey of works of al-Sulamī see Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*,

(*aḥkām al-jihād wa-faḍāʾiluhu*) served as a pamphlet of propaganda during the Crusade of St. Louis.[61] Subkī's long biography of al-Sulamī includes a conversation that took place, as it were, between al-Sulamī's archenemies, who, in accordance with a well-known literary topos, inadvertently give evidence to al-Sulamī's greatness. Addressing "the Kings of the Franks," the Ayyūbid al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl boasts that he had punished al-Sulamī, his great *qissīs* (the Christian term for priest), for criticizing his concessions to the Franks, and had imprisoned him for their sake ("*li-ajlikum*"). Subkī's citation of the reply of the kings of the Franks is as follows: "Had he [al-Sulamī] been our priest, we would have washed his feet and drunk the water!"[62]

3.4. *Themes of Friday-Sermons*

Al-Sulamī preached in favor of a militant anti-Frankish stand at the wrong time (from the perspective of his career), namely, at one of many moments of the first decades of the thirteenth century in which a conciliatory policy better served the interest of the rulers. Yet, propaganda for *jihād* was, of course, a prominent theme of preaching throughout the Ayyūbid period. The first *khaṭīb* who preached the counter-crusade was ʿAlī Abū Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (d. 499–500/1106). Speaking in the great mosque of Damascus in 498/1105, al-Sulamī (not to be confused with the later ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī, mentioned above) reproved the Muslim disarray and initial indifference in the face of the defeats of 492/1099. He deplored the neglect of *jihād*, the fragmentation of the Islamic world, and the moral decline amongst Muslims of his times. He was one of the very few men who had recognized, at that early moment, the depth of the threat the Crusaders posed to the Islamic Middle East, and had depicted them as enemies of the faith. He urged action, calling the "sultans of the country, and those prominent persons...who follow them, [to] drive away insignificant things and sluggishness, and go to fight the *jihād*...".[63] No one rose

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8:209–255; Rizwan Ali, *Izz al-Dīn*; introduction to al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 8–158; Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 61–79.

[61] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:243; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:215.

[62] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:244.

[63] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 105–108, 165ff.; Christie and Gerish, "Parallel Preaching," 144–46. For more on propaganda for *jihād* against the Franks, see Sivan, *L'Islam*, 142–150.

up to the challenge at that stage, nor carried on his preaching, until some two decades after his death. Then, the two themes al-Sulamī had elaborated on—the value of *ṭalab al-shahāda* (the intentional quest of martyrdom), and the call to emulate the example of the companions of the Prophet and early Muslim conquerors and their wholehearted dedication to the cause—were taken up, and tightly interwoven into the discourse of the counter-crusade.[64]

In the festive *khuṭba* that was delivered in al-Aqṣā Mosque on the first Friday after its conquest on Rajab 27th 583 (October 1187), Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-Zakī (d. 598/1202) celebrated the great achievement of the counter-crusade.[65] Ibn Khallikān reports that all the learned men that had been in the retinue of the sultan during the siege on Jerusalem vied for the honor, and each of them sent a manuscript sermon for the competition. Muḥyī al-Dīn, only thirty-three years old at that time, was chosen by Saladin himself, maybe because he had allegedly foreseen the reconquest of Jerusalem. In a poem composed in honor of Saladin's earlier capture of Aleppo (597/1183), he proclaims: "You [Saladin] captured the citadel of al-Shuhbāʾ (epithet of Aleppo) on the month of Ṣafar, forecasting the good news of the capture of Jerusalem in the month of Rajab."[66]

Dressed in a black robe, Ibn al-Zakī suitably opened his *khuṭba* with the Qurʾānic verse "So of the people who did wrong the last remnant be cut off. Praise be to Allāh, Lord of the worlds!" (6:45), and continued with a collection of all the verses that praise God in the Qurʾān (*al-taḥmīdāt*). Further quotations from the Qurʾān were scattered profusely throughout his speech, illustrating and stressing every point he touched upon. In the second section of his speech, he indulged in applause for the victory over the Franks (speaking of victory over polytheism, heresy and impurity), expressing jubilant gratitude for Islam's return to the holy city, in the grammatical first person. He eulogized the Prophet and the first four caliphs, and enumerated the virtues of Jerusalem and its role in sacred history. Evoking the

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[64] Sivan, "La genèse," 204. See also Mouton, *Damas*, 58–60; Talmon-Heller, "Muslim Martyrdom." Another early example of preaching the counter-crusade is that of the Shīʿī *qāḍī* Abū al-Faḍl b. al-Khashshāb (d. 528/1133–4) of Aleppo, whose *khuṭba* of 513/1119 "reduced the people to tears," and made them determined to fight (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubda*, 2:188; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 109).

[65] For Ibn al-Zakī's career (he became *qāḍī* of Damascus and *nāẓir al-awqāf* of the great mosque), see Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qudāt Dimashq*, 52–55

[66] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qudāt Dimashq*, 54–55; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 2:331.

very first significant victory of the Muslims at Badr (2/624), and the battles of ca. 15/636 at al-Qādisiyya and Yarmūk (the victories that opened the way to the conquest of Syria by ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb), Ibn al-Zakī congratulated Saladin for his victory. He mentioned the aid of the angels on the battlefield, supposedly reported both by the warriors of 2/624 and by those of 583/1187, thereby lifting the events of his own day to the heights of the divinely guided early heydey of the Muslim community. More down to earth, he warned the believers lest they imagine that their success was their own, lest they forget that victory comes from God alone, and turn their backs to his commandments. He called for the resolute continuation of *jihād*, "the best means of serving God," at that time of historical opportunity, stressing the importance of Muslim unity, announcing the miracle: for the sake of Jerusalem God has united all factions and made the armies of competing warlords into His united force.[67]

Full texts of sermons, such as that of Ibn al-Zakī, and even excerpts of sermons are a rare finding in our sources.[68] Two extant summaries of *khuṭba*s written by al-Malik al-Nāṣir Dāwūd of Karak were made available to us by his son, al-Amjad Ḥasan, who collected his epistles, poetry and other short works in a volume entitled *al-Fawāʾid al-Jalliyya*. Al-Nāṣir Dāwūd ruled Karak and territories in Palestine and Transjordan for more than two decades (626/1229–656/1258).[69] Like his father, he was genuinely popular in Damascus. He was known as a keen defender of Jerusalem on account of his condemnation of the Tall al-ʿAjūl agreement of Rabīʿ I 626/February 1229, and on account of his seizure of Jerusalem after the expiration of that agreement in December 637/1239 (an act enthusiastically compared, by a contemporary poet, to Saladin's liberation of Jerusalem in 583/1187).[70] Besides, he was considered a man of exceptionally broad learning, a skilled poet, an epistle writer and dialectician (*jayyid al-munāẓara*),

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[67] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 4:230–236, trans. 2:634–641; Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 2:161–170; Sivan, "Caractère sacré, 160–161." See parts of the sermon in translation in Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 189–191.

[68] This seems to be the situation regarding the medieval Islamic world in general. Linda Jones offers a fine analysis of research challenges and opportunities in this field, despite the dearth of source material (Jones, "Problems").

[69] Drory, "Al-Nāṣir," 162. Al-Amjad is crowned by Ibn al-Wardī as *the* Ayyūbid poet (Ibn al-Wardī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:151).

[70] Drory, "Al-Nāṣir," 170–171.

erudite in Ḥanafī law, who sponsored treatises in Ḥanafī *fiqh* and grammar, and encouraged the study of the 'ancient sciences'.[71]

Both extant sermons of his are dated Ramaḍān 646/1248, a decade or so after his arrival in Karak. According to the author of the compilation, al-Nāṣir ordered one of the professional preachers of Karak to practice its correct pronunciation under his supervision, and then learn it by heart. The preacher indeed committed the whole text to memory in one night, and communicated it to the congregation, assembled in the congregational mosque of Karak in the presence of al-Malik al-Nāṣir for *ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā*).[72] The other sermon may have been delivered by himself. The main parts of both sermons were devoted to impressing upon the minds of the listeners the signs of God's greatness and unity, to opening their eyes to their task in this world, and moving their hearts to realize the promise of heaven and fear the threat of hellfire. The sermon begins, as customary, with the praise of God, formulated in rhymed short sentences, evoking God by many of his ninety-nine beautiful names, stressing his benevolence. In the following section, the preacher provides a vivid description of the devotions of the angels, who never cease worshipping and never tired. He moves on to cosmology, presenting the Creator's wisdom in His arrangement of heaven (with its seven skies, stars, sun and moon) and earth (with its waters, winds and wonderful fields, flowers and fruits), stressing again that all these wonders were created to teach men about their creator and bind them to His obedience, rather than for the pleasure and amusement of their lowly, sinful, sickly souls. He does not neglect to mention the guidance of the Prophet, whom God, in his mercy, had sent to men in the era of ignorance (*al-Jāhiliyya*), and the healing power of the Qurʾān; the cure for ignorance, the teacher of truth. The assembly that gathered at the mosque for the Friday sermon is likened by al-Nāṣir Dāwūd to the assembly of mankind on the terrible Day of Judgment, albeit with several major differences: on that day it would be too late to repent—men will be exposed to God's wrath, and their fates will be sealed in accordance with their doings. Both sermons end with a prayer for sincere return

[71] Drory, "Al-Nāṣir," 175–177; al-Nāṣir Dāwūd, *al-Fawāʾid*, 85–93.

[72] A contemporary poet, Sayf al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī (d. 656/1258) praised the sermon, flattering al-Nāṣir Dāwūd by comparing him to his namesake, the Qurʾānic Dāwūd (biblical King David), the messenger of the *zabūr* (Psalms). See reference in al-Nāṣir Dāwūd, *al-Fawāʾid*, 65 n. 85.

to God and the forgiveness of sins. Al-Nāṣir first implores God's mercy on his own behalf, then begs him to accept his appeal for his brethren. Al-Nāṣir calls for meditation and reflection, regarding every natural phenomenon as a token, sign and proof (*āya, ḥujja, dalāla*) of the presence of God and His work of creation (*li-dalālat al-ṣanʿati ʿalā ṣāniʿihā wa-luzūm ḥudūth al-mawḍūʿāt li-qadam wāḍiʿihā*). In everything there is a lesson for the mindful (*ʿibra li-dhawī al-ʿuqūl*), yet prophethood and the guidance of the early prophets, and that of Muḥammad and the Qurʾān, through which God makes himself known, are indispensable in al-Nāṣir's scheme. He stresses God's benevolence in sending them to humans.[73]

The festive sermons, that were delivered shortly after the conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin by specially chosen orators, could be no more representative of the sermons delivered on a regular Friday by a typical *khaṭīb*, than were the sermons of the very learned theologically inclined al-Malik al-Nāṣir Dāwūd. As admitted above, our sources contain very little data on the contents and style of routine *khuṭba*s. It seems that Ibn Nubāta's sermons (tenth century) were still popular, and probably often imitated—Yāqūt tells in length and with obvious enjoyment about the ridiculuous grammarian and poet Shumaym al-Ḥillī, who was presumptous enough to claim to have written sermons that make Ibn Nubāta's superfluous.[74] Yet, there is some information we can glean in order to reconstruct the air of medieval sermonizing. In one of his *fatwā*s, al-Sulamī criticized fellow preachers and the ways of preaching in his times. He urges the *khaṭīb* to limit himself to subject-matter that befits the purpose of the sermon: praise of the Lord, supplications, and whatever incites fear and hope, encourages obedience, and teaches the people to refrain from sin.[75] Wishing to limit recourse to mundane matters and current events during the sermon, he permits the *khaṭīb* to refer to such issues only on the condition that he incites the audience to perform a relevant religious duty: *jihād*, prayer for rain (*ṣalāt al-istisqāʾ*), or

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[73] al-Nāṣir Dāwūd, *Al-Fawāʾid*, 32–33, 85–93.

[74] And poetry to replace that of Abū Nuwās and Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (Ibn al-ʿImād; Ibn Khallikān, *Shadharāt*, 7:9, *Wafayāt* 3:339).

[75] "*Al-thanāʾ wa-l-duʿāʾ wa-l-targhīb wa-l-tarhīb bi-dhikr al-waʿd wa-l-waʿīd wa-kull mā yaḥuththu ʿalā ṭāʿa aw yazjuru ʿan maʿṣiyya*."

pious acts (*aʿmāl ṣāliḥa*) during the month of Rajab.[76] He instructs preachers to recite from the Qurʾān during their *khuṭba*s, and to answer juridical questions, but condemns poetry, even poems with a religious lesson, as *bidʿa*.[77] In a similar vein, he deplores the use of rhetoric flourish, stressing that the sermon should benefit all, and calls on the preacher not to show off his eloquence by using rhymed prose.[78] In fact, he instructs him to give it up altogether, unless it serves a didactic purpose. Ironically, his own son Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, who assumed the *khaṭāba* in the communal mosque of al-ʿAqība, used to speak in rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) "like a soothsayer (*kāhin*)," claiming to be possessed by a *jinn*! He must have been very different from his stern father: he is said to have wept during his sermons, performing in a "*waʿẓ*-like style (*yataʿanna al-waʿẓ*)," that is, in a popular informal manner (that will be described in the following chapter).[79] In this respect, too, al-Sulamī senior seems to have been fighting against the current.

One of the documents that al-Qalqashandī reproduces in his encyclopedic manual to the administration of the Mamlūk state is, allegedly, the decree (*tawqīʿ*) by which *qāḍī al-quḍāt* Kamāl al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn al-ʿAdīm was appointed to the *khaṭāba*.[80] In it, the positive, benign effect of the preacher on his audience is commended, rather than his capacity to threaten, frighten and distress wayward believers. It is said there, that "he delights the ears with the pearls of his exhortation...and bestows upon the community on Fridays the

[76] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 326, 393–394, 483–488. About Rajab, see Kister, "Rajab," 191–223. An interesting earlier example of a preacher who admonishes his audience to perform concrete good works may be found in al-Muqaddasī's report of a Friday sermon he gave at the tomb of Ṣiddīq in the environs of Tyre: "In my address I urged them to restore this mosque, which they did, and they also constructed a pulpit for it" (Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 188; Wheatly, *The Places*, 415).

[77] He did not condemn the recitation of poetry on other occasions, justifying his position with quotations of the Prophet (al-Sulamī, *Ḥall al-Rumūz*, 63–64).

[78] The employment of *sajʿ* in sermons was introduced in the middle of the third/ninth century, and became the standard way of preaching in the tenth century (Mez, *Renaissance*, 323; Swartz, "Arabic rhetoric," 41).

[79] Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Manhal*, 1:112.

[80] Qalqashandī's identification of the nominee must be mistaken; Kamāl al-Dīn ʿUmar is indeed the name of the historian Ibn al-ʿAdīm, but, although his grandfather, uncle and father served as *khaṭīb*s, he did not—under Saladin's rule the *khaṭāba* in Aleppo was given to Shāfiʿīs (see above). For the same reason Ibn al-ʿAdīm probably did not serve as *qāḍī al-quḍāt* (again—other members of the family did: see Eddé, *Alep*, 364). However, it is the characterization of the *khaṭīb* in this text, rather than the identity of the nominee, that is of interest to us.

treasures of his own God-given virtues...the pulpits shake, enraptured by his delicious words...he saturates thirsty hearts [the image of drink for the thirsty is repeated twice]...when he reads [the Qurʾān, probably] the whole congregation is gladdened...and when he relates *ḥadīth* not one is fatigued."[81] Ibn Jubayr, eyewitness to a *khuṭba* in one of the congregational mosques of Cairo, was deeply impressed by a preacher of exactly that kind. He says: "he discoursed so sweetly and gave so moving a sermon, as to humble the hardest heart and cause the tearless eye to flow."[82]

In an anecdote about a charlatan he met in Anatolia in 616/1219, al-Jawbarī tells of a *khaṭīb* who used to urge the believers to give charity open-heartedly. On a certain Friday, while standing on the *minbar* ready to begin his sermon, he was approached by that charlatan. The man took an expensive wallet out of his pocket and cried out dramatically: "Sir! I am a poor man, with family. We have not eaten a thing for two days, so today, Friday, my wife and children said to me: Go to the mosque, maybe God will provide us with something to eat, and we will not starve..." He went on to say that he had found the wallet on his way to the mosque, but his conscience would not let him enjoy stolen goods, so he decided to hand his precious finding to the preacher. The preacher praised the poor man's piety and honesty in warm words, and called upon all those present to help him as much as they can. Finally, the man left the place with 200 *dīnār*s, and the wallet, which he returned to himself by another trick.[83]

Marc Saperstein, author of a couple of comprehensive books on traditional Jewish preaching, attributes the following, somewhat contradictory tasks to preachers: to educate, to amuse, to express the hopes and fears of the congregation, to defend tradition, to suggest new ideas, to represent the establishment, and to criticize the status quo.[84] It is unlikely that Muslim audiences expected to hear new ideas during the weekly Friday sermon. On the contrary: the scholarly preacher al-Khaḍir b. Shibl al-Ḥārithī (d. 562/1167) was disliked by the people

[81] Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā*, 12:439–440.
[82] "*wa-yulaṭṭifu al-waʿẓ wa-yuraqqiqu al-tadhkīr ḥattā takhshaʿu al-qulūb al-qāsiya wa-tatafajjaru al-ʿuyūn al-jāmida*" (Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 50; trans. in Broadhurst, *Travels*, 43).
[83] Al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 30–31; trans. in Bosworth, *Islamic Underworld*, 14.
[84] Saperstein, *Your Voice*, 2.

because he did not repeat the things they were accustomed to hear, and they complained that his sermon touched upon too many issues. Ibn al-ʿAdīm, who transmits this appraisal of al-Ḥārithī, adds that it should not impinge on the man's reputation. Perhaps Ibn al-ʿAdīm was more appreciative of originality and innovation,[85] but typical audiences clearly preferred preachers who evoked emotion and tears—such as Shaykh Abū ʿUmar.[86] As for criticism of ruling authorities, ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī seems to have been an extraordinary case. Obviously annoyed by a current practice of his colleagues ("*khuṭabāʾ hādha al-ʿaṣr*"), al-Sulamī argues that contemporary rulers should not be mentioned during the sermon, and certainly not praised unless they are worthy of praise. He condemns in sharp words even routine use of the laudatory titles (*alqāb*) "the Just" (*al-ʿādil*) or "the Learned" (*al-ʿālim*), and their counterparts, which were routinely employed to address Ayyūbid rulers.[87] He warns the *khaṭīb* that if he phrases his supplication in false terms (using *al-ʿādil* for a tyrant, for example), his power of intercession (*shafāʿa*)—the very resource of preachers that Saladin so cherished, according to the quotation that opens this chapter—would come to nothing.[88]

Al-Sulamī's Egytian disciple, Taqī al-Dīn Daqīq ibn al-ʿĪd (d. 702/1303), is said to have followed his master in this respect: he always addressed the sultans by the simplest designation "*Yā insān* (O human being)," by which he addressed everyone else, but renowned scholars. According to his biographers, Ibn al-ʿĪd's main purpose was to grant equal treatment to the high and the low, not degrade the poor and humble, nor elevate the rulers and emirs. In other words, he conveyed a social message, rather than a strict formalistic attitude towards laudatory titles.[89] The issue of proper titles was raised also earlier: the Ḥanbalī Ṣūfī al-Yūnīnī (d. 617/1220) refused to accept the *imāma* of Abū ʿUmar, virtuous as he was, because in his *khuṭba* he had mentioned the controversial titles of rulers.[90] Nūr al-Dīn is

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[85] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7:3315.
[86] Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 7:53.
[87] About Ayyūbid titles, see Eddé, *Alep,* 197–204.
[88] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 400–401. (Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 72; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:549). For a similar dispute in mid-eleventh century Baghdad, see Cook, *Commanding*, 125, n. 76.
[89] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥall al-Rumūz*, 87. This principle of his seems to have been quite exceptional.
[90] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1997, 1:373.

said to have demanded to know beforehand by which titles the *khaṭīb* planned to address him, so that he might correct him if need be. The gist of the text is praise for Nūr al-Dīn's truthfulness and humility; inadvertently, exposing close supervision of preachers. Still, despite the dependence of preachers on rulers, I found only one negative comment regarding the *khaṭāba*. It is a quotation of an emigrant from al-Andalus, the famous poet al-Shāṭibī (d. 590/1193), who explains, upon his arrival to Cairo, that he had left his homeland so as to avoid being nominated as *khaṭīb* and thereby losing his good name.[91]

3.5. *Imāms*

An official decree of appointment (*tawqīʿ*) to the *imāma* of the great mosque of Damascus, as preserved in al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshāʾ*, refers to the post of the prayer leader with superlatives. The nominee is called *qurrat al-ʿayn*—delight of the eye (or darling), and described as blessed with the good fortune to announce the elevating *shahāda* (declaration of faith), to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet (the very first *imām*, who had taught the people how to pray), and to confer blessings upon the Prophet's family and followers.[92]

According to al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), the nomination of prayer leaders in the larger central mosques (*al-masājid al-sulṭāniyya*) was the prerogative of the caliph, and "the caliph's nominee has a stronger title to the office than anyone else, however more virtuous or knowledgeable." In the absence of a caliph a vizier or *qāḍī* should be responsible for the nomination of *imām*s. If both the officially appointed *imām* and his officially nominated deputy are not in attendance, the people must agree on a prayer leader among themselves.[93] In smaller, privately dedicated mosques "built by people on the streets where they live, or by tribesmen for their tribes (*al-masājid al-ʿāmmiyya allātī yabnīhā ahl al-shawāriʿ wa-l-qabāʾil*)," says al-Māwardī, the local congregation (*ahl al-masjid, ahl al-balad*) should choose an *imām* by the majority of votes. Neither the patron (namely, the endower of the mosque) nor the ruling authorities should interfere, except in

[91] On Nūr al-Dīn, see al-Rawḍatayn, 1:373. On al-Shaṭibī, see Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 7.

[92] al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā*, 11:223.

[93] Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām*, 130; trans. in Wahba, *The Ordinances*, 112.

case of a tied vote.[94] Al-Māwardī does, however, list five qualities pertinent to the office: manhood, probity, knowledge of the Qur'ān, authority on religious matters and freedom from speech defects. He accords greater weight to religious knowledge, especially a minimal knowledge of the Qur'ān.[95] The Ḥanbalī Damascene jurist Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma offers a few additional guidelines regarding the election of a prayer leader. He gives preference to the owner of the house over the guest (in case of prayer at a private home), to the free man over the slave, to the healthy over the handicapped, and to the better Qur'ān reciter. He states, however, that those recommendations are merely in the category of *adab* (decorum) or *istiḥbāb* (preference), namely not legally binding.[96]

Subkī, in the very short chapter he dedicates to the *imām* in his manual of professions *Muʿīd al-Niʿam fī Mubīd al-Niqam*, writes that, besides leading the congregation in prayer, the *imām* should advise the devout on matters pertaining to prayer, ritual ablutions, and Qur'ān recitation.[97] The *imām*'s mandate, according to al-Māwardī, includes the appointment of muezzins and their instruction. The latter are obliged to perform the call to prayer according to the regulations of the *imām*'s school of law, and the congregation must also accept the *imām*'s manner of prayer.[98] Al-Ghazzālī had thought otherwise. According to his dictum, a Shāfiʿī cannot pray behind a Ḥanafī since he believes that the latter's prayer is invalid. Al-Sulamī disagrees, writing that the opposite ruling would decrease attendance at congregational prayers, and conflict with the basic imperative to worship God as a unified community. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī differs, by taking the point of

[94] Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām*, 133*;* trans. in al-Wahba, *The Ordinances*, 114–115; Grabar, "The Architecture," 31. The eleventh century Syrian Ḥanafī jurist al-Sarakhsī presents a similar view regarding the rights of a congregation praying regularly in a neighborhood mosque ("*masjid al-maḥalla lahu qawmun maʿlūmun*"), as opposed to the mosque situated on a public road or thoroughfare, for which no social group takes special responsibility ("*masjid ʿalā qāriʿat al-ṭarīq*"), see Johansen, "The All-Embracing Town," 151.

[95] Al-Māwardī, *Ordinances*, 114.

[96] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:26–42. He stipulates, however, that one should repeat his prayer if he finds himself 'trapped' into praying behind an unsuitable *imām* (*al-Mughnī*, 3:25–26).

[97] Subkī, *Muʿīd*, 114.

[98] Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām*, 31–132; trans. Wahba, *The Ordinances*, 113–114. Not everyone did: the Damascene scholar al-Ḥasan al-Anṣarī hesitated whether to pray behind Abū ʿUmar because the two were at variance regarding the inclusion of *bismallāh* in *sūrat al-fātiḥa* (Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Sīrat Abī ʿUmar*).

view of the *imām*. If he prayes properly in accordance to the ruling of his school of law, his prayer is valid, both for him and for the people whom he leads in prayer.[99] A match between the *madhhab*-affiliation of the *imām* and the congregation is not obligatory in Ibn Qudāma's opinion as well. Hence, he designates as permissible, or rather "not reprehensible (*ghayr makrūh*)" for Ḥanbalīs to pray behind a Ḥanafī, Shāfiʿī or Mālikī *imām*.[100] In a *fatwā* written for a Muslim who had a hard time choosing between a Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī *imām*, the Shāfiʿī jurisconsult ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī recommends that he pray behind the *imām* that is stricter regarding the correct fundamentals (*uṣūl*) and prerequisites (*shurūṭ*) of prayer.[101] Abū Shāma mentions in passing that some communities made additional demands of their prayer leaders—demands that, according to his view, ran contrary to religious law. He quotes an *imām* complaining that he and his colleagues were under threat of losing their jobs if they did not comply with popular demand and lead the controversial *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* of the month of Rajab (see pp. 63–65 above), contrary to their better judgment, and against dominant scholarly opinion![102]

Ḥanbalī and Ḥanafī scholars define the *imāma* itself as one of the *qurab*—the good works that are rewarded by closeness to God, and hence should not carry a salary (these include also the performance of the call to prayer, leadership of the pilgrimage caravan to Mecca, substitution for a pilgrim, and the teaching of the Qurʾān).[103] Al-Shayzarī asserts that *imām*s should not accept a salary, though they may be given presents. The Shāfiʿīs allow a salary, whereas the Mālikīs are divided.[104] The compliments Salāma b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaddād (d. 594/1198), the *imām* of the Ḥanbalīs in the great mosque of Damascus, earned from his biographers for having earned his living as a maker of scales (*qabbānī*),[105] seems to indicate that his proletarian way of life was exceptional. It is most likely that, more often than not, regular prayer leaders were paid through *waqf* endowments, as is indeed indicated by responsa dealing with the rights of absentee

[99] Jackson, *Islamic Law*, 178–181.
[100] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 2:23–24.
[101] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 291.
[102] "*Ḥifẓan li-qulūb al-ʿawāmm ʿalayhi wa-tamassukan bi-masjidihi, khawfan min intizāʿihi minhu*" (Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 209).
[103] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 9:314.
[104] Buckley, *The Book*, 130; al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 239, notes.
[105] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 1:397.

and substitute-*imām*s, and attested to by the endowments created by Saladin for the housing and salary of the *imām* of the Dome of the Rock (and by Ibn Jubayr's comment on the profitability of this occupation, quoted above).[106] Gifts were an alternative or additional source of income.[107] In many small neighborhood mosques, a permanent *imām* was not employed on a regular basis, and an ad hoc prayer leader would be chosen from among the men who came to pray.

3.6. *Profiles of Imāms*

The position of *imāma*, just like *khaṭāba*, was often passed on from father to son (or uncle to nephew), sometimes from master to disciple,[108] but in a fair number of Syrian mosques prayer leaders were immigrants, most likely, bereft of local family ties. Jamāl al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥarastānī, who died in the end of 614/1218 at the ripe age of 95, and his father, fit into both categories. They both emmigrated to Damascus from Ḥarastā, and found lodging in the vicinity of Bāb Tūma, where the father served as the *imām* of the nearby Masjid al-Zaynab, until his son replaced him.[109] Some emigrant *imām*s came from distant locations such as Shīrāz, Nishapur, Fez and Marrakesh; others—from closer Baghdad, Alexandria and Badlīs, or from nearby villages or towns. No wonder Ibn Jubayr tried to encourage fellow Maghribīs to settle in Damascus by assuring them that even if they did not have the good fortune to benefit from the plentiful endowments set aside for scholars there, they could still easily make their living as prayer leaders (or as reciters of Qurʾān, door keepers at holy sites, etc.).[110]

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[106] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 94; al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 221, 238; Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1997, 3:398, 400, 415, 4:332, 338. And see Mouton, *Damas*, 367; Gilbert, "Institutionalization;" Lev, *Charity*, 82.

[107] Shaykh Abū ʿUmar received gifts of money and food. Besides, shopkeepers in the market would not let him pay (Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Sīrat Abī ʿUmar*).

[108] For examples, see below; and Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 48:274, 50:359, 51:150. Abū al-Yaman al-Kindī was barely twenty years old when his teacher, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Maqarrī, at whose house he grew up as a son, died. He immediately took his place as *imām* (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 9:403, 422).

[109] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:82. Similarly, the *qāḍī* Abū Naṣr, son of the *imām* of Mashhad ʿAlī, Hibbat Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī, who seems to have been a humble Ṣūfī preacher from Baghdad, took over after his father's death (Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 48:274).

[110] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 278; trans. in Broadhurst, *Travels*, 289.

Indeed, Maghribī *imām*s are mentioned time and again: amongst them Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Qurṭubī, *imām* al-Kalāsa (d. 596/1200), who was also known as a calligrapher with an excellent Maghribī hand writing,[111] and Abū al-Faḍl Yūsuf b. Muḥammad, who, on his way to visit Jerusalem, stopped in a nearby village and remained there upon the request of local villagers that he become their *imām*.[112] In Damascus, people crowded to pray behind al-Qurṭubī because they felt he possessed *baraka*, and also because they were attracted to his fine voice—"*iltimāsan li-barakatihi wa-istimāʿan li-ḥusn ṣawtihi*").[113] But not all Maghribīs were equally successful. Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn tells an interesting anecdote about a "Maghribī stranger" who had settled in the village of ʿArūrā (in Mt. Nāblus), claiming that he could supply honey and olive oil from the tip of his finger, and offered to lead the prayer. The man attracted followers, but suspicious villagers went to inquire about him with two local venerated shaykhs who were considered to be blessed with *firāsa* (penetrating insight). The shaykhs, undoubtedly anxious to preserve their own authority in the region, cast further doubt on the man's piety. They even suggested that he was a trickster associated with Dajjāl, or with a female-*jinn*, rather than a performer of divinely inspired wondrous deeds (such as themselves).[114]

The careers of some urban *imām*s included the posts of school teacher *(muʿallim ṣibyān*), scribe[115] and muezzin,[116] as well as more prestigious jobs such as *muftī, mudarris, qāḍī* and *qāḍī al-quḍāt, khaṭīb* and supervisor of endowments (*mutawallī al-awqāf*). The latter offices were usually attained, so it seems, at a later stage in people's professional lives.[117]

Many of the *imām*s mentioned in our texts are presented as men of religious learning and moral stature. Some are portrayed as leading lives of asceticism (*zuhd*), devoting their days and nights to supererogatory prayer. A few of them were pronounced Ṣūfīs, who,

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[111] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 50:230. On Maghribī script, see Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*, 82–83.

[112] Al-Tādilī, *al-Tashawwuf*, 94–95. His praise is sung by no other than the great al-Ghazzālī, who happened to visit there. I thank Daphna Ephrat for this reference.

[113] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 267; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 17.

[114] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 94b; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 137–138.

[115] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 52:299.

[116] See e.g. Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 58:330; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 91, 106, 202, 207.

[117] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:82.

at some point of their lives, had spent long periods in seclusion, whether in a *khānqāh*, atop a minaret, or as residents of the holy places of the Ḥijāz and Jerusalem.[118] The *imām* of Masjid Dār al-Biṭṭīkh of Damascus, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī, for example, died on his way to visit Jerusalem, after having completed the *ḥajj* in the year 597/1200–1201. He was known by the epithet *zāhid* because of his fear of God and "exaggeration" in ablutions.[119] ʿImād al-Dīn al-Maqdisī was overly devoted to his vocation, at least for those in a hurry to perform their prayer and move on. Having heard that someone grumbled at the length of his prayers, and even swore never to come back and pray with him, he exclaimed: "Had he stood in front of the sultan for a whole day, he would not complain, but he complains for standing before his Lord for one single hour!"[120] The piety of ʿĪsā b. Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma (d. 615/1218), the *imām* of the congregational mosque on Mt. Qāsyūn, is indicated by his care not to purchase his food with *waqf* funds dedicated to the mosque, not even when on 'professional' errands.[121] The same motive appears in the story of Abū al-Faḍl Yūsuf b. Muḥammad, who is said to have never touched grapes from a vine that grew in the courtyard of his mosque. It never even occurred to him to inquire whether, as the *imām* of the mosque, he was actually legally entitled to the enjoyment of the fruit.[122]

Often, the prayer leader would reside in close proximity to his mosque, or even on the premises. Such an arrangement must have ensured his involvement in all matters pertaining to the mosque and its congregation. Chroniclers and biographers use phrases such as "*kāna sāʿiyan fī ḥawāʾij al-nās* (he did his best to fulfill the needs

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[118] See for ex. Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 48:245; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 140, 149, 162; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 4:1745, 1820; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:442.

[119] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:442.

[120] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:99. Ibn ʿArabī tells an anecdote about an *imām* so eager to shorten the prayer for the sake of 'the Turks' (probably impatient soldiers), that he said only "*qul huwa aḥad* (say He is One)" during each *rakʿa* of the supererogatory prayers of the nights of Ramaḍān. Still, he considered himself and his congregation to have read the whole Qurʾān with three such *rakʿa*s, claiming that this verse is equated to one third of the Qurʾān! (Drory, *Ibn al-ʿArabī*, 103, 105).

[121] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 52:254. Similarly, the *imām* and *khaṭīb* of Mardā (Mt. Nāblus), Aḥmad b. Abī al-Makārim al-Maqdisī (d. 622/1225), is praised for taking care of the maintenance of the mosque and of wayfarers, without taking anything from the *waqf* for himself (Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:163–164).

[122] Al-Tādilī, *al-Tashawwuf*, 94–95.

of the people)"; "*kāna lahu minhum aṣḥāb wa-jamāʿa wa-ḥasuna fīhi al-ẓann* (they [the worshippers] were his friends and community, and they thought of him well)," to describe such relationships.[123] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī tells of the Ḥanbalī *imām* of Nāblus after its reconquest by Saladin, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī (d. circa 624/1227), who spent his days in the mosque to the benefit of the people. He was a native of a near-by village, and son of its *imām*. His contemporary, Shaykh ʿImād al-Dīn ibn Qudāma, the prayer leader of the Ḥanbalīs in the congregational mosque of Damascus, is said to have habitually invited the poor to his home for dinner after the last evening prayer.[124]

Funerary steles also tell of the devotion of *imām*s to their vocation. The inscription on the grave of ʿAbd al-Mālik b. Zayd al-Dawlaʿī, who died on 598/1201 at the age of 91, claims that he had taken his last breath after having completed the afternoon prayer, and that he had not stopped praising the Lord until death overtook him. The inscription on the grave of the *imām* of the mausoleum of Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (in the cemetery of Bāb al-Saghīr) is similar in content, while that of Shāfiʿ b. Sālim simply states that he was the prayer leader of the mosque of al-Qaṣṣāʿīn for fifty consecutive years.[125]

Prayer leaders seem to have been only rarely involved in the affairs of the state. There is one conspicuous example that I am aware of: hearing about the agreement of 626/1229 between al-Malik al-Kāmil and Frederick II, according to which Jerusalem was to be ceded back to the Franks again, the *imām*s and muezzins of the holy city traveled to the sultan's camp at Tall al-ʿAjūl and dramatically announced an irregular prayer—"*fī ghayri waqt al-adhān*". The punishment they received did not deter the muezzin of al-Masjid al-Aqṣā to add to his *adhān* a few anti-Christian verses from the Qurʾān (such as 23:93, 19:34) while the emperor was visiting Jerusalem, a daring act in face of al-Malik al-ʿĀdil's order not to call to prayer at all during Frederick II's sojourn in Jerusalem.[126]

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[123] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 207; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:695.

[124] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 2:475, Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:171; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 105–106.

[125] Moaz & Ori, *Inscriptions arabes*, 57–58, 61, 71.

[126] Cahen, "La chronique," 138; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:656–668; Sivan, "Sanctity," 296–300.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ASSEMBLY OF EXHORTATION (*MAJLIS AL-WAʿẒ*)

Towards the end of the chapter on the physical and human geography of Syria, in his *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Maʿrifat al-Aqālīm* (*The Best Divisions for the Knowledge of the Regions*, first published in 375/985), al-Muqaddasī comments: "Learned men are rare, non-Muslims are numerous, as are lepers. There is no respect for preachers (*wa-lā khaṭar fīhi li-l-mudhakkirīn*)." *Mudhakkir*—literally 'a reminder', was one of three largely overlapping terms used by medieval authors of the first centuries of Islam to designate the occupation of admonishing, especially commoners, to pious behavior, on occasions other than the official Friday sermon. Later in the passage al-Muqaddasī adds, with more than a hint of contempt: "The preachers (*al-mudhakkirūn*) are usually story-tellers (*quṣṣāṣ*)."[1] Two centuries later, authors as learned as al-Muqaddasī present Syrian preachers as reputable pious scholars, and gatherings for assemblies of exhortation—as a favorite and highly respectable social-religious pastime. Was al-Muqaddasī uncommonly disparaging, or had standards of preaching in Syria changed between the late tenth and the late twelfth centuries? My impression is that the latter is true, namely, that popular preaching was indeed upgraded to become a decent scholarly occupation with established norms. The term used for this type of preaching, or exhortation, in the later medieval sources is usually *waʿẓ*;[2] the term used to designate the preacher is *wāʿiẓ*.[3]

[1] Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 179, 182; trans. in Collins, *The Best*, 150, 153. For a short surveys of types of Islamic preachers, see Meisami, "oratory and sermons;" and Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 14–15. On the negative image of the *qāṣṣ*, see Berkey, "Storytelling"; al-Athamina, "Al-Qaṣaṣ"; and see, for example, al-Ṭurṭūshī's quotation of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb referring to the impure motivations of storytellers (al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb al-Bidaʿ*, 76–77).

[2] The root *w*ʿ*ẓ** appears many times in the Qurʾān; see for example 11:46 (attributed to God), 26:136 (to prophets), 34:46 (to Muḥammad), 3:138 (referring to the Qurʾān itself).

[3] For other works on this topic, see Radtke, "*Wāʿiẓ*," 56; Pedersen, "The Islamic Preacher," 1:226–251; *ibid*., "Criticism of Preacher," 215–231.

Assemblies took place in diverse locations: most often in the congregational mosque and its courtyard, in neighborhood and village mosques; sometimes in the *muṣallā* (a large open space, usually reserved for the festival prayers), in *madrasa*s and by shrines of sorts. Other possible locations were cemeteries, funerary processions, the grounds and *dīwān*s of citadels or palaces, and open spaces.[4] *Majālis* were convened on any day of the week, especially on Saturdays, at various hours of the day. Unlike the *khaṭīb*—the preacher of the Friday official sermon, the *wāʿiẓ* was not formally appointed by the ruler and was not obliged to endorse political authorities in his speech. He was less bound by conventions, and could perform in a more spontaneous and 'charismatic' manner.

The art of popular preaching became part of the curriculum of *madrasa*s in twelfth century Baghdad. It was taught by first-rate teachers, and performed by scholars who vied for fame and prestige with their peers.[5] Merlin Swartz attributes this process to the energetic patronage of the Ḥanbalī vizier Ibn Hubayra (d. 560/1165). Ibn Hubayra brought traditionalist preaching into the service of his political patrons, the ʿAbbāsid caliphs al-Muqtafī and al-Mustanjid, aiming at the re-establishment of the power of the caliph with the help of popular sentiment, while undermining the authority of his rival, the Seljuk sultan.[6] *Majālis al-waʿẓ*, held in open spaces on the banks of the Tigris, and in the halls of prominent *madrasa*s, were attended by great and enthusiastic audiences.[7]

Seljuk Baghdad—with its militant Shīʿī and Ḥanbalī populations, bitter antagonism between Ashʿarī, Muʿtazilī and Ḥanbalī theologians, fierce competition between caliph and sultan (and their entourages), and irritable Turkish garrisons situated in and around the city—was an inflammable city. The political authorities occasionally imposed bans on certain or even on all preachers, in an attempt to preserve peace

[4] See Pedersen, "The Islamic Preacher"; Pouzet, *Damas*, 131. Some preachers assumed both the roles of *khaṭīb* and *wāʿiẓ* on different occasions, or in different places (Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 146). In modern Egypt, *wuʿʿāẓ* preach in urban and rural mosques, schools, clubs, factories, hospitals, army units, and prisons (Gaffney, "The Office," 250).

[5] Makdisi, *Rise of Humanism*, 173–186, 351. Ibn al-Jawzī amongst them—see biography of his pupil (Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 53:99).

[6] See Swartz's introduction to *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣaṣ*, 27–29. On the renewal of the institution of the *wāʿiẓ* in twentieth-century Egypt, see Gaffney, "The Office," 247–257.

[7] Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 53–54; Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī*, 27–29.

and order. Baghdādī preachers considered offensive were threatened with arrest or exile, and some were indeed expelled from the city.[8] According to Swartz, some of these bans were actually provoked by preachers who used their influence with authorities in order to silence rival colleagues.[9] Syrian towns of the Ayyūbid era, in contrast, were infinitely calmer most of the time, and preaching was usually carried out without interference.

An assembly of exhortation was a 'happening', an 'event' rather than an academic lecture. The audience—usually a diverse crowd with respect to social status and religious education—participated in it, demanding, outright or implicitly, that the preacher comply with their tastes and preferences. During the assembly, people voiced their praise, disapproval, remorse, devotional ecstasy and other sentiments.[10] The interaction between preachers, patrons of assemblies (often local authorities), and audiences will be analyzed throughout this chapter, following an attempt at sketching the profiles of popular preachers.

As most of the book, this chapter relies mainly on narrative sources, written between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Regrettably, there are hardly any extant sermons or shorthand protocols of assemblies of exhortation from Ayyūbid Syria. Historians of Christian preaching—a huge field of study, researched in diverse contexts and methodologies—are much more fortunate; they have plenty of manuscript sermons to study. But then, texts of sermons pose their own set of methodological problems: it is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to establish the relationship between the live assembly and the written text of the sermon, to reconstruct the event of the sermon within its context, and to estimate its impact from the written texts. The sermon was, of course, a show, that could only be partly captured in text; the preacher was undoubtedly better seen than heard by most participants, and much of his impact came from his gestures and tone, and from the earlier perceptions people had about him, rather

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[8] Swartz, "Rules," 227. See also a few examples in Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 59, 64–65. There seems to have been a similar pattern in the contemporary Jewish community: complaints made by local dignitaries against itinerant preachers who offended them, or their sensibilities, could result in excommunication, or at least a reprimand from the Jewish authorities (Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:217; and see below).

[9] Swartz, "Rules," 237.

[10] See Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, 90 nn. 13–16.

than from his words.[11] Narrative descriptions of preaching of the kind medieval Arabic sources do supply, often include descriptions of the manner of the preacher, the composition of the audience, and its attitude towards the preacher. They may also offer data on the location, length and circumstances of the gathering. All these pieces of information allow us to recover non-verbal elements of preaching and some of its contents, at least as seen from the point of view of one of the spectators—the author, or his informant.

Among other relevant literary sources available for research are didactic works of well known preachers. Those works, which are replete with quotations of *ḥadīth*, short anecdotes and longer moralizing stories, must have been part of the repertoire of the author while he was giving an oral performance. This is not mere conjecture: chroniclers who describe a particular *majlis* of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 655/1257), a preacher to whom a large part of this chapter will be devoted, mention by name a certain story that he had related to his audience. The story appears in writing, detailed and vivid, in one of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's didactic works—*al-Jalīs al-Ṣāliḥ wa-l-Anīs al-Nāṣiḥ* (The Good Companion and Intimate Advisor).[12] Another work ascribed to him, *Kanz al-Mulūk fī Kayfiyyat al-Sulūk* (The Treasure of Princes on the Fashion of Behavior),[13] contains moral stories of similar characteristics. Most likely, those compilations also served Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī as source material for sermons; or else, they were a written record of his treasure of preached oral anecdotes. Whichever the case, this material should be useful for reconstructing the contents of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's preaching.

4.1. *The 'Event' of the Assembly*

At a typical *majlis al-waʿẓ* in early thirteenth-century Damascus, one could expect some, if not all, of following pleasures: a professional recitation of the Qur'ān, an admonition—flavored by touching tales about the righteous, contrasted with threatening accounts of the sinful, excerpts of poetry, an update from the Frankish frontier, perhaps some

[11] See discussions in Maier, *Propaganda*, 18–19; Thompson, *Revival Preachers*, 13–14, 22–23. Both authors had hardly any sermon-texts to rely on.

[12] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 89–90.

[13] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Kanz al-Mulūk*, 38–93.

world news, a discussion of questions of faith and proper religious practice, an entertaining anecdote, and best of all—scenes of tearful penitence and dramatic conversions. One could mix and mingle with a large crowd of fellow-men, including high ranking *ʿulamāʾ* and members of the ruling elite, and perhaps catch a glimpse of the intricacies of local politics and power relations.

Narrative descriptions tell us that *majālis* invariably opened with a session of Qurʾān-recitation; a prologue intended to build up the liturgical and aesthetic dimensions of the occasion, and arouse pious sentiments and expectation in the audience. An anecdote, primarily told to demonstrate the sense of humor of the Baghdādī preacher Muḥammad b. Munajjiḥ Abū Shujāʿ (d. 581/1185), reveals something of the importance of Qurʾān recitation on such occasions, and the prestige of professional reciters. During Abū Shujāʿs visit to Wāsiṭ, the town's people, who obviously enjoyed his preaching, asked him to double the number of his performances per week. Abū Shujāʿ, flattered, tried to comply, but whenever he fixed a day for an assembly, the Qurʾān reciters claimed that they were too busy to come. "Had I known," joked Abū Shujāʿ, "I would have brought over a day from Baghdad!"[14]

Lacking a full description of the program of the *majālis* of Syrian preachers (not even that of the renowned Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī) let us look at the model followed by his grandfather, the great Baghdādī preacher Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200). His assemblies always opened with Qurʾān recitation, conducted skillfully by the best readers in Baghdad. When they were done, Ibn al-Jawzī would say words of exaltation and praise for God and His Prophet, and recite a supplication (*duʿāʾ*) on behalf of the caliph and his subjects. Only then would he begin his speech, with exegesis (*tafsīr*) of the Qurʾānic verses that were recited at the opening of the gathering. A question-answer session came next, offering the audience an opportunity to be heard as well. During the admonition, the part properly called *waʿẓ* or *tadhkīr* (literally: reminder), Ibn al-Jawzī prompted the faithful to live by

[14] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 59:129. Note that *majālis* were scheduled in advance. Our sources, in contrast with Christian medieval sources, do not record truly spontaneous assemblies, such as those by the Frenchman Humbert of Romans, who was always ready to seize an incidental gathering of men (pilgrims preparing to depart, laborers waiting for an offer of work, or people suddenly attracted to some curiosity) to deliver an unplanned sermon (Murray, "Religion," 296).

the prescriptions of the religious law, and chastened those who were lax, invoking alarming eschatological themes.[15] His sermons, so we learn both from his homiletic literature and from descriptions of his preaching, usually ended with the recitation of deeply emotional and evocative poetry. Amorous poetry of sorts was his favorite genre. Even though he was a professed adherent of the Ḥanbalī school of law, he indulged in Ṣūfī and even Shīʿī poetry. He often also read verses of his own composition.[16]

One of Ibn al-Jawzī's guidelines for popular preaching was to leave aside complicated theological matters "which simple minds cannot comprehend," and stick to basics. Subkī, who mentions quite a few preachers in his biographical dictionary, justifies this approach wholeheartedly in his manual of professions *Muʿīd al-Niʿam*.[17] Theology seems to have been, as a norm, indeed left out from assemblies of exhortation in twelfth-thirteenth century Syria. But perhaps it was not only the lack of proper religious training of part of the audience that made preachers reluctant to discuss theology. There may have been a general unwillingness to touch debated issues, so as not to provoke disagreement and strife. Concord, rather than intellectual deliberation, was high on the agenda of *majālis al-waʿẓ*, political unity being, at that time, a prominent theme in the scheme of the leaders of the counter-crusade. The importance attached to unity is eloquently articulated by Ibn Taymiyya, who wrote in the early Mamlūk era that: "God…commanded togetherness and harmony, and forbade division and disagreement…the people who follow the Messenger most closely disagree among themselves less than all other groups who claim to adhere to the Sunna. All those who are close to the Sunna disagree among themselves less than those who are far from it…".[18]

Yet, there were preachers who dared tackle theological issues. In Manbij, people embraced the school of al-Ashʿarī (together with the

[15] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ*, 137–140 in: Swartz, "Rules," 228–229; Swartz, "Arabic rhetoric," 43.

[16] See the discussion of Ibn al-Jawzī's use of poetry in Swartz, "Arabic rhetoric," 45–47; Hartmann "La prédication," 339. The Alexandrian preacher Abū al-Fawāris b. al-Talāʿī (al-Tilāʿī?), whom Ibn al-ʿAdīm heard as a youth in Aleppo, was a poet too; one of his passionate Ṣūfī poems is reproduced by Ibn al-ʿAdīm, in his *Bughya*, 10:4580.

[17] Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's*, paras. 328; Subkī, *Muʿīd*, 112–113.

[18] Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 152–153.

hatred of Ḥanbalīs so typical of this school) under the influence of a *wāʿiẓ* called al-Damāgh. The informant on this religious transformation of the people of Manbij, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ruhāwī, who apparently was not a partisan of the Ashʿariyya himself, deplores al-Damāgh's success, complaining that Manbij became devoid of "*ahl al-ʿilm*" (probably meaning experts on *ḥadīth*), while Ḥanbalīs and "those professing the *sunna*" had to go under cover.[19] Al-Malik al-Nāṣir Dāwūd, who was also inclined towards the Ashʿarīyya, as we have seen, delved into theological issues in his Friday sermons. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī also occasionally attempted theological discussions, as we shall see below.

Al-Jawbarī's thirteenth-century 'manual' to the Syrian underworld,[20] of all sources, contains another description of the arrangement of an assembly of exhortation, which resembles closely the structure of Ibn al-Jawzī's *majlis*. Al-Jawbarī—who devotes one chapter of his book to crooks who made their living pretending to be men of religion or pious destitutes—provides an amusing description of the assembly of one such imposter. Qur'ān recitation (during which the crook discreetly consumed his lunch) came first, followed by very emotional exhortation, with ample mention of God, *akhbār al-ṣāliḥīn* (tales of the righteous), renunciation of this world and fearful descriptions of the hereafter. People were moved to tears (the quack himself had reddened his eyes in advance, with an ointment of mustard seeds soaked in vinegar) and loudly declared themselves penitents. At the climactic moment, a tambourine player, who, so we are told by the author of the book, collaborated with the 'preacher', went up to the *minbar* and handed over his notorious instrument. The preacher threw it to the ground and broke it to pieces. He completed the musician's 'penance' by clipping his hair (more accurately, the *nāṣiyya*—forelock) and then recited a few moving lines of poetry. The audience reacted with hysterical cries of approval. People surrounded the 'preacher', hailed him, showered presents upon him, and carried him home on their arms.[21]

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[19] This is told in the biography of the ascetic Salāma al-Ṣayyād al-Manbijī (Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh*, 48:327–328). See also Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 15:331.

[20] See p. 19, above.

[21] On another occasion, the same preacher pre-arranged a 'conversion' to Islam (al-Jawbarī, *al-Mukhtār*, 20–22; quoted in Bosworth, *Islamic Underworld*, 112). Other sources that delight in the presentation of rogue preachers are the nearly

Poetic exaggeration aside, the enthusiasm of al-Jawbarī's audience seems real enough. Other sources also tell us that eloquent preachers, those who knew how to capture the interest of heterogeneous audiences, enjoyed all at once the patronage and admiration of rulers, the attendance, compliments and sometimes learned comments of fellow *ʿulamāʾ*, not to speak of the open veneration of commoners. Sometimes, in their excitement, people would rise during the sermon itself, and recite poetry in honor of the preacher, or shower him with presents.[22] No wonder al-Ghazzālī deemed it necessary to warn preachers of the temptations and pitfalls of their vocation: ambition, arrogance, self-righteousness and even jugglery. Special warning is sent both by al-Ghazzālī and by the much later Ibn al-Ukhuwwa (d. 729/1329) in a suspiciously similar wording) to young preachers, who adorn themselves, quote poetry and use exaggerated bodily gestures in order to make a greater impression on women.[23]

Our exposition of the event of an assembly may be deficient if we stick to strict definitions of *waʿẓ* and ignore a series of large public assemblies convened in honor of the recitation of the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) in Damascus, early in the thirteenth century. The main protagonist of those assemblies was Ḥanbal al-Ruṣāfī (d. 604/1207) a minor functionary at one of the mosques of his home city, Baghdad. Al-Ruṣāfī was a humble man, "accustomed to a poor-man's diet of oats," who happened to be the last person to have heard the entire *Musnad* from a well-known deceased scholar. At some point in his life, he took to the road in order to transmit it to ensuing generations, and reap the fruits of this personal asset of his, knowing that people loved to hear *ḥadīth* with the shortest possible *isnād*. Fewer intermediaries meant that there were fewer places where errors could enter the text; and more importantly, a short *isnād* meant closer contact with the spiritual power of the Prophet

contemporary *maqāmāt* of three authors: Hamadhānī, Saraqusṭī and al-Ḥarīrī: see Young, "Preachers and Poets," 202. For 'pre-arranged' miracles and conversions by Italian revivalist preachers, see Thompson, *Revival Preachers*, 94–97.

[22] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:649, 742; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 1:199. See also Ibn al-Jawzī's criticism of ecstasy and the squandering of property on assemblies (Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's*, paras. 201–204), and Dhahabī's critical appraisal of the overt enthusiasm of the common people (Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23:197).

[23] Pedersen, "The Preacher," 247; al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 4:122–125; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 182.

and with the earlier, more excellent generations.[24] And indeed, even though the text al-Ruṣāfī recited, a compilation of *ḥadīth* classified according to its transmitters rather than by subject matter, can hardly be considered as ideal for popular consumption,[25] and although he himself does not appear to have had any practice as a lecturer or preacher, a multitude of laymen showed up. Moreover, despite al-Ruṣāfī's pious insistence that he was not seeking fame or profit, his tour was financially supported by al-Malik al-ʿĀdil, who also honored him with his presence.[26]

A public recitation of a guest transmitter, just like a typical assembly of exhortation, was an occasion for the ruler to exhibit his commitment to Islam, his close contacts with scholars, and his concern for the people. Regular citizens of Damascus seized such opportunities to rub shoulders with the sovereign and his entourage, and with the leading scholars of town.[27] The words did not have to be exciting. Eerik Dickinson even goes so far as to claim that: "the last reason one attended the transmission of a *ḥadīth* text was to master its contents...Everything in the quick and dirty recitations conspired to render the contents of the book irrelevant."[28] It must have been a juncture that generated a sense of communal identity and solidarity, combined with spiritual elevation; perhaps approaching Turner's elusive 'communitas'.

4.2. *Rulers and Preachers*

In the list of categories of the men of religion who assembled to celebrate the *Mawlid al-Nabī* (the birthday of the Prophet) organized in Irbil by its ruler at the beginning of the thirteenth century, *wuʿʿāẓ*

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[24] I obtained those insights, as well as the special derogatory term for someone who took *ḥadīth* from written texts rather than from a reciter—*ṣaḥāfī*, from Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ," 481, 484, 488, 504.

[25] See a diametrically opposed evaluation, namely that "the *Musnad* might well represent [the tradition] of the folk-preachers (*quṣṣāṣ*) of the streets and marketplaces of dozens of Islamic cities" (Graham, *Divine Word*, 68–69; quoted in Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 41).

[26] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21:432. On Ayyūbid support for the propagation of *ḥadīth* in general, and for visiting transmitters in particular, see Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ," 481, 490.

[27] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 6:2972–82.

[28] Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ," 503.

are mentioned in the dignified second place: after the jurist and before readers of the Qurʾān, the Ṣūfīs and the ascetics of all sorts.[29] *Wuʿʿāẓ* of twelfth-thirteenth century Syria were, as we shall see, men affiliated with the *jāmiʿ*, the *muṣallā*, the *madrasa* and the court; namely, part and parcel of the religious elite of Ayyūbid Syria.

Most of the Zangid and Ayyūbid rulers had cordial relationships with preachers: they arranged for *majālis al-waʿẓ* and often attended them in person. Nūr al-Dīn, for example, invited the popular preacher of Irbil, Abū ʿUthmān al-Muntajab b. Abī Muḥammad to Syria, to join him on a raid, offering him a large sum of money for his preaching (which the preacher piously, or perhaps 'typologically', refused to accept). Saladin and his sons would come to the assemblies of the Ḥanbalī preacher Zayn al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Najā, or al-Najiyya (d. 599/1203), and treat him with overt respect ("*wa kāna lahu jāh ʿaẓīm wa-ḥurma zāʾida*"). One of the greatest honors conferred upon him was the permission to deliver the first *waʿẓ* sermon in the al-Aqṣā Mosque after the liberation of Jerusalem in 583/1187. Ibn al-Najiyya did not shy away from material tokens of appreciation as well, and the generous emoluments that he is said to have received from his royal patrons allowed him to lead a lavish lifestyle quite openly.[30] Al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam established a deep and enduring friendship with the most important preacher of his days, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī. The two of them shared a zealous devotion to the Ḥanafī school of law, which they both had adopted in adulthood, turning away from the *madhhab* traditional to their families.[31]

The *wāʿiẓ* Saʿīd b. ʿAlī Abū al-Maʿālī al-Wāsiṭī (d. 625/1228) was honored by the ruler of Irbil. The long period of his residence and preaching in that town—fifty years, most of them under the same ruler—speaks for itself.[32] Nāṣiḥ al-Dīn ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 634/1236), who traveled from his native Damascus to Cairo, Aleppo, Irbil, Medina, Jerusalem and Baghdad on preaching tours, is said to have been respected by different rulers, particularly of the Ayyūbid clan

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[29] "*Yajtamiʿu fīhi al-dunyā min al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-fuqahāʾ wa-l-wuʿʿāẓ wa-l-qurrāʾ wa-l-ṣūfiyya wa-l-fuqarāʾ min kull ṣinf*" (Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:671; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 4:119).

[30] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:515; Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1997, 2:380; Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 50:398–340.

[31] See Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's long and affectionate eulogy of al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam (*Mirʾāt*, 8:644–652).

[32] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 63:228–229.

(“*kānat lahu ḥurma ʿinda al-mulūk wa-l-salāṭīn, khuṣūṣan mulūk al-Shām min Banī Ayyūb*”).[33] He joined Saladin’s entourage, among many other *ʿulamāʾ*, during the conquest of Jerusalem.[34] Despite his descent from the Banū al-Shīrāzī—the first Ḥanbalī clan to have settled in Damascus—Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma, one of the Ḥanbalī emigrants from Mt. Nāblus preceded him as head of the school of law in Damascus. Only after Ibn Qudāma’s death in 620/1223, did al-Nāṣiḥ acquire that position. Later in life, he became the professor of Madrasat al-Ṣāḥiba, which was established by Saladin’s younger sister Rabīʿa Khātūn (d. 643/1246) especially for him (apparently, at the prompting of his daughter, Amat al-Laṭīf, who was a close companion of Rabīʿa Khātūn).[35]

An invitation to preach was one of the tributes bestowed by rulers on visiting scholars. Nūr al-Dīn, who often held assemblies of exhortation in his citadel, called the famous Shāfiʿī jurist Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nīsābūrī (d. 577/1181–2) and the Baghdādī Ṣūfī Shaykh ʿAbū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168) to make a detour from the route of their pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) to Jerusalem, and address the Damascene audience. Mentioning that event, the historian Abū Shāma pays tribute to Nūr al-Dīn’s “*istimāʿ li-l-mawʿiẓa*”—attentiveness to exhortation,[36] but does not say anything about the exhortation itself. Other authors allude to al-Suhrawardī’s preaching in Baghdad, claiming that thanks to him many a Muslim returned to God.[37] Abū Saʿīd Kökbürī invited the *wāʿiẓ* Ibrāhīm b. al-Muẓaffar (d. 620/1223) to preach in the citadel of Irbil in his presence, and bestowed favors upon him.[38] Al-Malik al-Ẓāhir offered *kursī al-waʿẓ* (the chair of the preacher) in the court-citadel of Aleppo in 604/1207 to two honorable guests: the Ḥijāzī scholar Tāj al-ʿAlāʾ (d. 610/1213)[39] and the caliphal delegate

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[33] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:194.

[34] Sivan, “Sanctity of Jerusalem,” 293; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 179; Ibn Shaddād, *Sīrat al-Sulṭān*, 161; trans. in Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 77.

[35] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:193–201; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 7:288–291. On Rābiʿa Khātūn, who attended the inaugural lecture at her *madrasa* seated behind a curtain, and on her companion Amat al-Laṭīf, see Humphreys, “Women,” 40, 46. Madrasat al-Ṣāḥiba remained the one and only Ḥanbalī institution initiated and financed by the Ayyūbid house.

[36] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1:346. See also Berkey, “Storytelling,” 63–64.

[37] Ibn Wardī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:159. The *ziyāra* to Jerusalem did not take place after all: the cease-fire with the Franks had ended during al-Suhrawardī’s stay in Damascus.

[38] Ibn al-Mustawfī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:155–157.

[39] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 4:1878–1880.

Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), the nephew and pupil of the above mentioned Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī. Abū Ḥafṣ stopped in Aleppo on his way to Damascus, where he was to invest al-Malik al-ʿĀdil with the symbols of *futuwwa* and accord him, at long last, an official appointment from the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Nāṣir.[40] In 612/1215 it was Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, sent to Aleppo on a private mission by al-Malik al-Ẓāhir's brother al-Ashraf Mūsā, who preached in the citadel. He addressed current affairs on that occasion, briefing the audience about the turbulent northern front, and the seizure of Antioch by the Armenian king Leon II.[41]

The historian al-Yūnīnī claims that Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī often rebuked rulers (*yunkiru ʿalayhim*), even those who admired him greatly and sought out his company. Al-Yūnīnī employs the verb *yataṭaffalūna ʿalayhi*—they intruded upon him—thus conveying Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's pious distaste for the company of rulers and his laudable devotion to 'commanding right and forbidding wrong' (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahyi ʿan al-munkar*).[42] Employing the same discourse, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī himself labels one of his colleagues—ʿImād al-Dīn al-Wāsiṭī (d. 652/1254)—a *munāfiq* (hypocrite), explaining that he was too friendly with powerful patrons. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī claims that the audience to whom al-Wāsiṭī preached realized his insincerity and booed loudly when he spoke in praise of his benefactor, the vizier al-Sāmirī.[43] This is a rather unusual charge. In spite of their symbiotic relations with rulers, very few preachers were accused of flattery and sycophancy in our sources. It seems as if the prestige of *wuʿʿāẓ* was scarcely tainted by their connections with the court, or even by their conducting of propaganda on the court's behalf (as we shall see in the next chapter). Perhaps the opposite is true, and courtly patronage only enhanced the position of preachers.[44]

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[40] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 3:180; Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 138–140. Ibn al-Wardī accompanies his report about the caliph's message with a sharp condemnation of al-Nāṣir's *bidaʿ*, and of men who follow his ways, claiming that contemporary *ʿulamāʾ* shared his thoughts about the caliph (Ibn al-Wardī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:126–129). This is interesting stuff for a study on the relations between Syria and the caliphate, but beyond the scope of this work.

[41] Ibn Laʾūn, in his pronunciation (Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:579–580).

[42] Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:40.

[43] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:792.

[44] Similarly, Knysh claims that "[Ibn al-ʿArabī's] biographers emphasized prestige with temporal rulers as a sign of [his] acceptance by the contemporary religio-political environment [not as a cause for disapproval]" (Knysh, *Ibn al-ʿArabī*, 45).

This should not surprise us after all: in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries tribute to the ideal of the independent scholar, unpolluted by the favors of rulers was usually no more than lip service, even among Ḥanbalīs, who were once the standard-bearers of this ideal.[45] Although Prophetic *ḥadīth* ranks the 'commanding of right and the forbidding of wrong' to unjust rulers as most praiseworthy, sometimes even as the highest form of *jihād*,[46] cautious non-confrontation gained implicit legitimacy early enough. This was one outcome of the deeply rooted Sunnī abhorrence of *fitna* (civil strife) and disruption of public order, not to mention the *ʿulamā*'s instinct of self-preservation.

The imagery of revival, or what Ibn al-Jawzī called *yaqẓa* (spiritual 'awakening'),[47] was prominent in *ʿulamā*'s discourse about preaching. The biographer Ibn Rajab quotes a simple man from the neighborhood of al-Qarāfa in Cairo exclaiming at the end of a *majlis* given by the Damascene *muḥaddith* ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī in his local mosque: "We resembled the dead until al-Ḥāfiẓ [ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī] came and took us out of our graves (*mā kunna illā mithl al-amwāt ḥattā jāʾa al-Ḥāfiẓ wa-akhrajanā min al-qubūr*)."[48] Referring to Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, ʿImād al-Dīn ibn Qudāma says "Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf conquered the Syrian littoral (al-Sāḥil) and made Islam victorious, and you, Yūsuf, revived the Sunna in all of Syria (al-Shām)." Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma echoes him, saying: "Through you God has revived the Sunna and subdued *bidʿa*. These lands were conquered by you, as Jerusalem was conquered by your namesake, Yūsuf."[49] Thus, by singling out popular preachers from among their lines, the *ʿulamāʾ* of Damascus constructed themselves as full partners to the successes of the sultan. They colored the collaboration between *wuʿʿāẓ* and rulers in a new, favorable light, as if saying that the conquest of the territories of the enemies of Islam and the conquest of the hearts of the people to Islam, were the joint mission of rulers and scholars.

From the view point of rulers, smooth relations with preachers were understandably desirable: in an age before print, preaching was the most powerful means of mass communication and successful preachers could become the most influential informers, opinion

[45] See Cook, *Commanding*, 123–127.
[46] Cook, *Commanding*, 476.
[47] Hartmann, "La prédication islamique," 342.
[48] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:11.
[49] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:51.

makers and educators. Nūr al-Dīn was so well aware of this, that early in his career he requested the caliph to order the *wuʿʿāẓ* of Baghdad to make public his firm (and newly acquired) devotion to Islamic prescriptions of rule. More specifically, he wanted the *wuʿʿāẓ* to announce that he, Nūr al-Dīn, had abolished all unlawful taxes (*mukūs*) in his domain.[50] Several of the Ayyūbid rulers maintained close ties with Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī—by far the most committed and influential preacher in Syria in his days; hence, the main protagonist of the following section.

4.3. *Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1257)*

Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī moved to Syria at the beginning of the thirteenth century, when he was barely twenty years old. He chose Aleppo as his first station away from Baghdad, having been offered residence in a *khānqāh* established by the Armenian Atābeg Shihāb al-Dīn b. Tughril.[51] In 606/1209–10, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī left Aleppo and settled in Damascus, where he was to spend most of the remaining fifty years of his life, teaching and preaching, enjoying immense popularity. He absented himself from the city mainly for preaching tours, to destinations such as Daqūqā, Irbil, Mosul, Ḥarrān, Ruhā (Edessa), Akhlāṭ, Raqqa, Aleppo, Hebron (al-Khalīl) and Jerusalem.[52] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī must have inherited the oratory skills of his renowned grandfather, Ibn al-Jawzī, and learnt from his vast experience, but perhaps his success as a preacher in Syria was also connected in some way to his foreign origins. His Baghdādī background, combined with long residence in Syria, may have provided him with the perspective and the somewhat protected status of an outsider from the rundown but still prestigious caliphal city, together with the intimate knowledge of the insider.

In Damascus, Sibṭ's *majālis* usually convened on Saturdays. At an older age, after his retirement to a *zāwiya* in the suburb of Mt. Qāsyūn, he restricted his preaching to the Saturdays of the three

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[50] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1:380; Elisséeff, *Nūr al-Din*, 660, 682. He did that in Mosul and Cairo in 566/1171. For the economic benefits of removing *mukūs*, i.e. custom tolls, see Heidemann, "Arab Nomads," 295, 297–298.

[51] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:685.

[52] He spent 626/1230–633/1237 in Karak, with al-Malik al-Nāṣir Dāwūd.

sacred months of Rajab, Shaʿbān and Ramaḍān.[53] Saturday may have been the day off for the students and teachers of *madrasa*s (although there is more evidence that Tuesdays and Fridays were non-teaching days).[54] A unique (as far as I know), and rather surprising reference to Saturday (*yawm al-sabt*) as a day set aside for recreation and enjoyment, is included in a description of Damascus by Zakariyyāʾ al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283):

> The people of Damascus engage in play and amusement every Saturday. On that day, the master can no longer restrict his slave (*mamlūk*), nor the father his son, nor the husband his wife, nor the teacher his student. Early that morning, each one makes sure he has the means for the expenditure of his day, and then the *mamlūk* meets with his peers, the youngster with his mates, the wife with her womenfolk, and the man, likewise, with his comrades. The privileged go to the gardens, where they have palaces and fine places, while the rest of the people go out to open spaces, which are verdant with plants and flowing water, summer and winter. Those, who must work to make ends meet, move their shops to Damascus on Saturdays. There are jugglers and comical performers (*maskhara*), singers and wrestlers and eulogists (*faṣṣālīn*), and the people are busy playing and amusing themselves until late in the day. Then, they leave it all, and go to pray the evening prayer in the great mosque.[55]

The assemblies of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī usually took place either in the Umayyad Mosque, or in the congregational mosque of Mt. Qāsyūn, and were not devoid of amusement. The audience would fill the interior and courtyard of the mosque until it could no longer contain the crowd, and then would 'spill over' into the near-by streets and alleys. Sometimes, the assembly would resort to the larger space of the *muṣallā*.[56] Everybody attended, neatly listed in pairs by contemporary chroniclers: the great and the humble, the young and the old, rulers and commoners, scholars and Ṣūfīs, Jews and Christians, men and women.[57] Members of the two sexes sat separately, we are reassured. It was the *muḥtasib*'s business to supervise the segregation of men and women during *majālis al-waʿẓ*, as explained in a contemporary

[53] Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:239. On the sacred three months (*al-ashhur al-ḥurum*) in medieval Syria, see al-Ṭurṭūshī, *al-Ḥawādith*, 123–131.
[54] Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 95.
[55] Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād*, 191–192.
[56] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:58; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:701.
[57] Yūnīnī, *Dahyl* 1992, 1:40; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 48–49, 195.

ḥisba manual, and to see that members of each sex leave via different routes at their termination.[58]

According to an estimate Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī himself made, on a good day some 30,000 people flocked to his sermon.[59] Those particularly eager to sit close to the preacher had to spend the night preceding the assembly in the vicinity of the mosque.[60] They would sit on mats and bales of hay which they had spread around, performing *dhikr* (chanting God's names) and reciting the Qurʾān by candlelight. Needless to say, they gave up work for the day: as suggested above, *majālis al-waʿẓ* were lengthy affairs.[61] Abū Shāma, one of the Damascene scholars who never missed a sermon of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, did not complain about their length; on the contrary, he considered the assemblies one of the pleasures of this world. On his word, Damascenes would go on talking about Sibṭ's sermons long after the assembly had dispersed, marveling at their merits (*al-maḥāsin*), discussing the recitation of poetry, the conversions to Islam, and the acts of penance that had taken place before their eyes. They would review the questions that had been posed to the preacher, and debate over his answers.[62]

Criticism of preachers is rare in our sources; perhaps it is intentionally concealed in the largely autobiographical accounts we have of *majālis al-waʿẓ*. Al-Yūnīnī, however, reports one unpleasant incident Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī had to endure: someone mockingly asked him what was the shameful thing he had discovered about the Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal that made him reject his authority ("*Ayy shayʾ ẓahara laka fī-l-imām Aḥmad ḥattā rajaʿta ʿanhu*?"), teasing Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī for his conversion from the Ḥanbalī to the Ḥanafī school of law. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī tried to silence him, but the man would not stop his heckling until Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī had stepped down from the *minbar*.[63]

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[58] Shayzarī, *al-Ḥisba*, 106.

[59] His grandfather Ibn al-Jawzī boasted of 300,000 (Swartz, "Rules," 232).

[60] Or even three days (al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 8:239).

[61] Compare with the gathering in advance for sermons of Anthony of Padua in 1233 (including a lively description of battles over seats), in Thompson, *Revival*, 85.

[62] "*Mā waqaʿa bihi min al-maḥāsin wa-inshād al-ashʿār wa-l-taḥadduth bi-man aslama fīhi, aw tāba, wa-īrād mā kāna fīhi min suʾāl wa-jawāb*" (Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 49; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:58).

[63] Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1954, 1:41. On switching from one school of law to another, see my "Fidelity, Cohesion," 108–114.

Ignoring that episode in his own accounts of the assemblies he had convened, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī claims that often people would not let him step down from the pulpit. That was the case at the end of a sermon he delivered in Damascus in 604/1207, on the eve of his departure for one of his preaching tours. Knowing that he was about to leave the city, people chanted their disapproval in unison, crying "*lā* (no), *lā, lā*." The excitement was such, he tells us, that more than five hundred penitent men clipped their forelock (*nāṣiya*).[64] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī gives no further details about this gesture, but the Maghribī traveler Ibn Jubayr, who had witnessed it at a *majlis* of Ibn al-Jawzī in Baghdad, does. According to Ibn Jubayr's description, in the midst of a demonstration of fervent public penitence "each [one of the penitent men] offered him [the preacher] his forelock which he cut off, and placing his hand on the head of each, he prayed for them. Some fainted and he raised them to himself in his arms...People threw themselves on him, confessing their sins and expressing their remorse. Their hearts and minds were overcome by emotion."[65] Ibn al-Jawzī's grandson, who was greatly influenced by his example, undoubtedly tried to emulate it.[66]

A sermon that Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī gave in the summer of 607/1210 (shortly after a three-year truce between the Ayyūbid ruler al-Malik al-ʿĀdil and the Frankish king Amalric had expired) had also ended with a large pile of hair from the heads of penitents. In his chronicle, *Mirʾāt al-Zamān*, he tells us that the pile was so big that it reminded him of 'the story of Abū Qudāma', and he related it to the audience. The story itself is not reproduced in *Mirʾāt al-Zamān*, but, as mentioned above, it does appear in a chapter devoted to *jihād* in another work by Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī: *al-Jalīs al-Ṣāliḥ*. It is a work in the genre of the 'Mirror for Princes', written for the Ayyūbid prince al-Malik al-Ashraf Mūsā, during the first weeks of 613/spring 1216.

'The story of Abū Qudāma', a ninth century veteran of many raids against the Christians of Byzantium, is a tale of a bizarre encounter

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[64] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:530; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 48–49; al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 325, 327. On the history of this gesture, see Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:227.

[65] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 220–222. For more of Ibn Jubayr's enthusiastic description of daily preaching in Baghdad in 580/1184, see *ibid*., 200–204; trans. in Broadhurst, 228–234.

[66] A good indication of the extent of this influence may be found in Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's literary works (Kronholm, "*Akhbarana jaddi*").

Ibn Qudāma al-Shāmī had experienced at the end of a day's battle. A woman approached him and begged him to cut off her beautiful long plaits of hair and use them as reins for his horse when going to fight *fī sabīl Allāh* (in God's way). He refused at first, suspecting the machinations of the devil. But the woman insisted, presenting the sacrifice of her hair as a means of expiation for her sins, so finally he complied. The next morning Abū Qudāma found himself fighting at the side of a very courageous young boy, who insisted on going out to battle in spite of his youth and Abū Qudāma's persuasions that he go home. Mortally wounded, the boy made Abū Qudāma promise that when the war ended he would go to Medina and inform his mother of his death. To Abū Qudāma's horror, he could not bury the dead boy—the earth would not accept the body. Heart broken, he left the uncovered body to be devoured by birds and beasts of prey, and set out to Medina. He found the house. A little girl opened the door. She saw her brother's saddlebag in Abū Qudāma's hand and cried out: "Last year we lost my father, the following year my brother, and now my other brother?!" Abū Qudāma could hardly stop his tears, but the bereaved mother—none other than the mysterious woman who had sacrificed her plaits of hair for the cause of *jihād*—asked him, on the threshold of her house, whether he had come to condole or to congratulate. She explained: "If you came to tell me that he died—condole, but if he died the death of a martyr (*ustushhida*)—congratulate." When Abū Qudāma told her that the earth refused to accept the corpse of her son, her mind was completely rested. She explained that the boy had often expressed the desire "to be assembled [on the Day of Resurrection] from the bellies of birds and beasts of prey,"[67] an expression taken from Prophetic *ḥadīth* in praise of martyrdom.[68]

The mother's chilling devotion to *jihād* conforms, of course, to the topos of parents who encourage their sons to sacrifice themselves, rejoice in their martyrdom, and forbid any mourning over them,[69]

[67] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 106–107. For other versions see *ibid*., 79. See also Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 10:4596–4599. For another story about a courageous woman, a princess who follows her father when he gives up royalty in quest of religious devotion, see Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Kanz*, 81–84.

[68] For references see Kohlberg, "Martyrdom," 292, n. 52.

[69] Kohlberg, "Martyrdom," 287; Giladi, "'The child was small," 378; Jarrar, "Martyrdom," 102–105. See another example: an Ismāʿīlī mother who mourns the survival(!) of her son in Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 4:1970.

which is known to us both from earlier literature, as well as from the reality of our own times. It must have been well-known to Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's audience, yet Abū Qudāma's story had an electrifying effect. A crowd of people, headed by the governor (*wālī*) of the city of Damascus and other dignitaries, surrounded Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī when he descended from the pulpit, and escorted him to the larger space of the *muṣallā*. From there, a sizable party of men continued in the direction of Frankish-held territory, and was joined on the way by three hundred armed men from the village of Zamlakā. They all stopped in Nāblus, where Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī gave a second sermon, this time in the presence of the Ayyūbid governor of the principality of Damascus, al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī dramatically awarded al-Muʿaẓẓam with the hair he had collected from penitents in Damascus, and a raid on adjacent Frankish settlements followed.[70] Happily, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī and his men, even though inspired by the example of martyrs of old, had suffered no martyrdom themselves. They returned to Damascus victorious and heavy with plunder.

Another dramatic tale from the lore of the Byzantine front told by Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī in his *al-Jalīs* (and most likely also in his assemblies) is that of a duel between a devout Muslim and his Rūmī (Greek) foe. The two had agreed to respect each other's prayers and halt fighting for the times of prayer. The Muslim's turn to pray came first. The Christian kept his promise and stepped aside, but when it was his turn to pray the Muslim had a strong urge to kill him. Then he heard a voice reminding him, with a quotation from the Qurʾān, that promises must be kept, and he abided by his word. After hearing from the Muslim of what had saved his life, the Christian blessed Allāh and converted to Islam.[71] The main message here, I think, is not the merits of keeping promises, nor a call for religious tolerance, but rather, a call summoning men to appreciate the marvels of God's conduct in the world—one of the most prominent implicit motives of Muslim authors of all genres.

Jihād was a recurrent explicit theme in Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's exhortations.[72] While the pioneering preacher of the counter-crusade, the

[70] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:544–545; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 69; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:58; Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 61:62.

[71] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 90–91.

[72] For more on propaganda for *jihād* against the Franks see Sivan, *L'Islam*, 142–150; Hillenbrand, 161–167; Christie and Gerish, "Parallel Preaching." On earlier

Damascene ʿAlī b. Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (d. 500/1106) directed his appeal to 'the community of sultans of the country', calling them to raise the banner of *jihād* and fight back,[73] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī usually addressed the topic of *jihād* in compliance with the specific request of one or another Ayyūbid ruler of Damascus. Such was the case towards the end of 616/1219, after the fall of the Egyptian town of Damietta to the forces of the Fifth Crusade. Al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam, by then a close friend, requested him to urge the people of Damascus to join his forces in Nāblus again. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī then assembled a large audience in the great mosque of Damascus, and read al-Muʿaẓẓam's letter to the people of Syria. In his letter, al-Muʿaẓẓam did not appeal primarily to Muslim religious sentiments, but spoke of the material damages caused by the Frankish occupation. He called on the Muslims to regain lost territory: 1600 private estates (*milk*) and 400 estates of crown property (*sulṭāniyya*), now in the hands of the Franks. Al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam was a genuinely popular ruler,[74] and people were apparently ready to enlist, but later, the local dignitaties seem to have changd their minds, saying that war is for men of war, namely, should be carried out by the professional army.[75] Admittedly, that was indeed the norm in the Ayyūbid period.[76]

It is interesting to note that a Christian author, the anonymous composer of a survey of the forces Saladin amassed for the siege of Acre, ascribes Muslim preachers a major role in raising religious motivation among their warriors and in mobilizing great forces. He claims (wrongly, of course) that the Caliph of Baghdad had promised the remission of sins to any Muslim who would go out and join Saladin's campaign,[77] projecting onto the Muslim camp the norms of the Latin crusades. Those were indeed usually announced by preachers,

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quṣṣāṣ and *wuʿʿāẓ* who promoted holy war see Pedersen, "The Islamic Preacher," 232; Berkey, "Storytelling," 57. In modern Egypt, the Ministry of War employs *wuʿʿāẓ*. They were particularly active in Palestine in 1948, and at Port Saʿīd in 1956 (Gaffney, "The Office," 250).

[73] Christie and Gerish, "Parallel Preaching," 143–144.

[74] See Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:210–211, for example.

[75] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:604. On the fifth crusade see Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 162–170.

[76] Although some exceptions exist. See Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 5–8, 205.

[77] Kedar, "A western survey," 113–122. I thank Beni Kedar for turning my attention to this source. On the meager assistance the caliph al-Nāṣir was prepared to offer Saladin at that point, see Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin*, 215; Ibn Shaddād, *Sīrat al-Sulṭān*, 212; trans. in Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 109.

who also recruited participants and collected money for crusading, promising the absolution of sins for Christians who fight for the pope. Once a crusade was on its way, preachers joined campaigns to sustain the enthusiasm of participants and give them encouragement, or else they preached to audiences at home and prayed with them to support the Crusaders in the field.[78] Model crusade sermons either concentrated on the penitential and devotional aspect of crusading (as a means of combating the enemy within), or, on exciting rage against the external enemies, by demonstrating their wickedness and enmity towards true religion. They also emphasized the crusader's service to Christianity as a whole, and to Christian brethren suffering under the oppression of infidels.[79]

Preaching during the winter of 626/1229, on the specific instructions of al-Nāṣir Dāwūd b. al-Muʿaẓẓam (and in line with his own convictions, as he somewhat apologetically adds), Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī attacked al-Muʿaẓẓam's current rival within the Ayyūbid house, al-Malik al-Kāmil, for delivering Jerusalem to Frederick II in accordance with the much debated accord of Tall al-ʿAjūl. Lamenting the fate of the holy city, 'the first of the two *qibla*s', fallen yet again into the hands of the infidels, he condemned, in a rare act of outright criticism of political authorities, the treacherous Muslim kings, who had allowed the tragedy to occur.[80]

Some time later, on the 28th of Ramaḍān 627/July 15th 1230, Sibṭ suggested that the assembly plead with him for the victory of al-Malik al-Ashraf, who was then combating Jalāl al-Dīn Khwarizmshāh in Anatolia. Curiously, so he notes in his chronicle *Mirʾāt al-Zamān*, a cloud of thick mist covered the assembly at the end of the prayer. When it lifted, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī joyously announced al-Ashraf's victory. Ten days afterwards, news from the battlefield arrived, and confirmed his 'vision'. Miraculously, writes Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, the battlefield had been covered by mist at the very same time as the

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[78] Maier, *Crusade Propaganda*, 3.
[79] Maier, *Preaching*, 116–117. After offering this typology, Maier supplies wonderful examples of other themes of preaching the cross (*ibid*., 121–122); Christie and Gerish, "Parallel Preaching," 143.
[80] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:654; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:245; Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 203.

assembly in Damascus, for the benefit of al-Malik al-Ashraf and his men.[81]

In his *al-Jalīs*, following some thirty pages of Qurʾānic verses, *ḥadīth* traditions and stories (mainly historical episodes with a moral, ranging from the days of the Prophet to Abbāsid times)—all in praise of *jihād* warriors and martyrs—Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī devotes a short discussion to the lexical meanings of the word *jihād*. There are five kinds of *jihād* in his classification: against the infidel, against Iblīs, against heretics (namely, combat by polemics and persuasion), against one's soul (that is the *jihād* of the penitents: *jihād al-nafs li-l-tāʾibīn*), and finally—the *jihād* against one's heart (namely, the struggle to purify the heart from everything but the presence of God, the supreme goal of the righteous and Ṣūfīs). The virtue of *tawba* (penance), so dear to the heart of preachers, is second only to *al-rujūʿ bi-l-kulliyya ilā al-ḥaqq* (the absolute return to God), rated, in this list, above warfare on the battlefield.[82] Of course, none of those hierarchies, so popular in medieval Arabic literature, should be taken too seriously—authors shuffled them around like a pack of cards. Yet, it is noteworthy that, in the midst of the crusading period, *jihād* against carnal desires retains its superiority over combat against the Christian enemy, in the rhetoric of a popular preacher.

Al-Malik al-Ashraf once asked Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī to devote a sermon to a treatise of which he, the Ayyūbid prince, was particularly fond: the *Maqāṣid al-Ṣalāt* (The Purports of Prayer) by ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī complied. He expounded on the significance of prayer, and exhorted the people to listen carefully to orations from the treatise, to study them, and to teach them to their children.[83] Thus, a literary work otherwise hardly accessible to most people was transmitted orally to a large audience, or, in Jonathan Berkey's words, "the texts transmitted by preachers and storytellers

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[81] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:662. El-Eflaki tells a similar story in his hagiographical account of the life of the Ṣūfī shaykh Béhaʾ el-Dīn Wéled of Anatolia. For a third version, a present-day historian's account of the unexpected victory of the Ayyūbids at that battle, see Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 219.

[82] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 110–111.

[83] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:239. Al-Sulamī's *Maqāṣid al-Ṣalāt* was published by ʿA.Kh. al-Ṭabbāʾ (ed.), Damascus 1413/1992–3.

overlapped with those studied in classes in *madrasa*s, mosques, and elsewhere."[84]

Occasionally, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī also ventured into the realm of theology. In the course of one of his assemblies he touched upon the thorny question of *ruʾyat Allāh* (the vision of God), and reported that he had experienced a magical moment—"*wa-kāna waqtan ʿajīban*."[85] On another occasion he addressed the highly-charged issue of the attributes of God (*ṣifāt Allāh*), quoting Qurʾānic verses and *ḥadīth*, carefully avoiding *tashbīh* (anthropomorphism), *taʿwīl* (allegoric interpretation) or *taʿṭīl* (the 'stripping' of God of his attributed). Evidently, he did his best not to alienate neither the moderate Ḥanbalīs nor the Ashʿarīs, and propagated the most middle-of-the-road theology regarding the attributes of God. Abū Shāma, who usually comments upon Sibṭ's preaching with great admiration, disagrees with his attitude in this matter. According to his view, if a scholar brings such issues before commoners (*al-ʿawāmm*) he must seize the opportunity to explicitly refute anthropomorphic exegesis.[86] A contemporary of Abū Shāma, the eminent Jewish Egyptian scholar Moses Maimonides, expresses a similar sentiment in his (Arabic) *Guide to the Perplexed*.[87]

Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's moral teaching, as represented in the *Jalīs*, concentrates on justice, obedience to authority, and kindness to others. He quotes the Prophet, saying that obedience to him and his delegate is equivalent to abiding by God's law, and adversely comparing the rebel to the pagan men of the Jāhiliyya.[88] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī picturesquely illustrates the religious significance of kindness through a *ḥadīth* portraying *ahl al-nār* (the residents of hell) and *ahl al-janna* (the residents of paradise) arranged in two rows facing each other. Some of the latter pull a few of their less fortunate brethren out of their row

[84] Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 16. Regarding the 'overlap' between teachers of elitist circles and teachers of popular sessions, an issue I addressed earlier, see ibid., 66.

[85] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 73; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:59. For other examples of popular preaching circles that introduced complicated theological problems, see Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 77.

[86] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 104.

[87] "the negation of the doctrine of corporeality of God and the denial of His having likeness to created things ... are matters that ought to be clear and explained to everyone according to his capacity ... upon children and women, stupid ones, and those of defective natural disposition, just as they adopt the notion that God is one (Maimonides, *Guide*, 81).

[88] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 33.

and into theirs, in retribution for small services and acts of kindness they had done for them while in this world.[89] Justice is glorified in a *ḥadīth* that places one hour of justice above sixty years of worship and fasting.[90] A chilling description of the fate of the oppressor after death conveys the same message. Great and mighty as he may have been in this world, in the hereafter all his riches and companions will be gone. He shall lie alone in his shrouds, "in the house of rot and decay," on the dirt and hard rock, his pretty face unrecognizably disfigured, awaiting hell-fire.[91] In his 'Mirror for the Princes' Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī moralizes, telling disquieting tales of kings who realize the iniquitous nature of royal life with all its luxuries.[92]

The thrust of Sibṭ's exhortation is aimed at comforting the oppressed rather than at rebuking the wrongdoers. He assures the oppressed, again with ample quotation of *ḥadīth*, that they are closest to God, and that He will undoubtedly answer their prayers. He employs various anecdotes to drive the idea home. One is about an old woman whose little hut was demolished by a rich tyrant, and Jibrīl (Gabriel) himself was sent to avenge the wrong. Another, tells of the fall of the great Barmakid viziers, who had turned a deaf ear to the petitions of an old woman whose son had been unjustly arrested. Only when they find themselves fallen from grace and behind bars, do they sorrowfully realize that God sees to the retribution of those wronged, be they the humblest of the earth. A third story tells of the death of the tyrannical Umayyad governor al-Ḥajjāj, three days after having executed the righteous Saʿīd b. Jubayr.[93] Here again, the most powerful culprit is made to pay the price of his offence. A *ḥadīth qudsī* quoting, as it were, God himself, assuring the believers that He is willing to forgive sins against Himself, but warning them that He does not forgive wrongdoing towards other believers unless redressed, seems to convey a similar message. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī calls on the powerful to act justly, he offers sympathy towards the oppressed, perhaps towards the lower orders in general, but—and this

[89] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 42–43.
[90] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 36.
[91] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 59.
[92] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 249–301.
[93] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 49–50. The first two anecdotes are attributed to Wahb b. Munabbah (d. ca. 110/728).

is the main point—expects them to wait patiently for God and his agents to put things right.

4.4. *Less Known Preachers*

Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī was the most acclaimed preacher of Syria at his time. He was also a historian who recorded his own career with pride. Naturally, the sources tell us much less, if at all, about humbler preachers. Yet, we will try to save their names from total oblivion and glean whatever information there is regarding preachers such as the ʿIrāqī Ṣūfī preacher Ibn al-Shāshīr (d. 601/1204), who preached at funerals, in mosques and in villages,[94] or Abū Bakr al-Ḥamāwī, "the *wāʿiz* at the mosque of Abū al-Yaman," who died in 649/1252, at the age of ninety.[95] While al- Ḥamāwī was affiliated with one particular mosque, his contemporary, Shaykh Tāj al-Dīn Jaʿfar al-Sarrāj (d. 649/1251), was an itinerant preacher. Known also as a performer of *karāmāt* (wonders) and tutor of Ṣūfī novices, al-Sarrāj preached in Ismāʿīlī villages of northern Syria (Mt. al-Summāq, Sarmīn, al-Bāb, al-Buzāʿa), apparently propagating Sunnī Islam. According to his biographer, he was quite successful: under his influence many people "returned" to God ("*wa-rajaʿa bi-sababihi khalq kathīr ilā Allāh*").[96]

The historian Thiqat al-Dīn ʿAlī Ibn ʿAsākir supplies a few biographical details about ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Marwān al-Tanūkhī (d. 559/1164). ʿAbd al-Raḥmān came from a lowly background—his father was a *munajjim* (astrologer) who exercised his profession by the side of the road, and he, as a youth, would sing or recite poetry in the marketplace. He began his career as a preacher at funerals, and after some time rose to a '*kursī*'—literally a chair (or in our context, a pulpit)—a more permanent and prestigious position. Who accorded it to him—we do not know. He could arouse fear and hope, and make people cry and laugh (a talent he sometimes used inappropriately, according to Ibn ʿAsākir, who thought laughter at the cemetery offensive). After gaining a measure of recognition and some money,

[94] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 77; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:61; al-Ṭabbākh, *Iʿlām*, 4:431.
[95] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 187.
[96] Ibn al-Wardī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:183.

he left for Baghdad, where he renounced all those worldly assets and turned to asceticism. He returned to Damascus towards the end of his life, to resume preaching there. His biographers observe that despite the respect he had earned for himself, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Tanūkhī did not refrain from preaching at funerals—apparently at the 'low-end' of preaching.[97]

A truly controversial figure was Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl, a preacher who settled in Damascus in 620/1223, and offended various members of the local elite with his witty mocking poems. Abū Shāma accuses him of involvement in shady business, such as the falsification of coins.[98] I find it hard to judge whether the man was indeed a crook (fit to appear in al-Jawbarī's book about the underworld), or rather an honest but disturbing critic of his more compliant contemporaries. At any rate, he seems to have been a rather unusual type: I have found no other Damascene preachers criticizing the *qāḍī*, the *muḥtasib* or the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* outright. Rather, they all seem to have been part and parcel of the religious elite, and quite loyal to it.

Women preachers are an even more enigmatic and rare phenomenon. The Baghdādī(?) Khāṣṣa bint Abī al-Muʿammar al-Mubārak, a female student, or perhaps teacher (the epithet used is *ṣāḥiba*) of Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī, preached in her *ribāṭ* to female audiences. She also transmitted *ḥadīth*, a scholarly occupation more traditional to women.[99] So did Khadīja bint Yūsuf, known as Bint al-Qayyim al-Wāʿiẓa, who died at a ripe age in 699/1299–1300. Her father, a Baghdādī bath-house keeper, realized that she possessed unusual talents and allowed her to study *ḥadīth*, Qur'ān, calligraphy, and preaching. In due time, she made good use of her training, preaching before audiences of women in the Syrian towns of Damascus, ʿAlā' and Tabūk. Known also as an outstanding storyteller of the *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, she must have been an attractive preacher, but at some point, just like ʿAbd al-Raḥmān mentioned above, she quit her performances and secluded herself in her home.[100]

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[97] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh*, 35:399; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 6:299.
[98] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 84–85.
[99] Dhahabī, *al-Ta'rīkh*, 49:215.
[100] Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 13:296.

4.5. *Manners of Preaching*

Styles of preaching vary greatly. Some preachers put emphasis on clarity and coherence, some on eloquence and beauty, while others considered moral content as of sole importance and effect. Some preachers engaged in amusing anecdotes and fantastic tales, while others stuck to a solemn scholarly manner of admonition.[101] Vocabulary may be high, perhaps even deliberately barely comprehensible by commoners,[102] or popular, drawing on everyday life and experience. Ecstatic speakers resorted to rhymed prose (*sajʿ*), poetry and embellished speech, while 'sober' types made use of Qurʾān exegesis (*tafsīr*), *hadīth, fiqh* and stories about the pious (*ḥikāyāt al-ṣāliḥīn*).[103] The only hint I have found of schools or traditions of preaching in our sources is a short notice in the biography of Manṣūr b. Sayyid al-Ahl al-Miṣrī (d. 620/1223). It says that al-Miṣrī was nicknamed "the one known by al-Qazwīnī (*al-maʿrūf bi-l-Qazwīnī*), because in his preaching he followed the path of the well-known *wāʿiz* Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī." What that path was we are not told, but we can try to sketch several features of popular preaching in Ayyūbid times, based on preachers' statements.

Obviously, the first and foremost goal of popular exhortation was to supply devotees with a meaningful religious experience, rather than with knowledge. When Ibn al-Najā introduced a visiting lecturer to the audience assembled in 'his' mosque, he stated his hope that his guest would install the fear of God (*raghba*) in the people. That was probably his own goal when addressing the congregation himself. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī used the metaphor of calling or summoning (*daʿwa*) people to God's gateway to describe his mission,[104] and chose their rhetoric and non-verbal devices accordingly. Moreover, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī felt gratified when he spied tears—presumably tears of remorse

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[101] See Ben-Aryeh Debby, *Renaissance Florence*, 37–56.

[102] According to Giles Constable, in Europe, "sermons in Latin had a snobbish appeal even when (or perhaps because) it was not understood by all listeners." Besides, "as in an opera, the sound of the words was as important as their meaning" (Constable, "Language of Preaching," 139, 143, 151).

[103] See Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21:191–193, on the preaching of Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl Abū al-Khayr al-Qazwīnī (d. 590/1194). See also Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 1:436, on the preaching of Ibn al-Najā.

[104] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:876; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:11. On the image of man knocking at God's gateway or door, see Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, 214–219.

and repentance—in the eyes of his listeners. His biographers claim that merely by uttering several simple words, or quoting a couple of lines of his poetry, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī could reduce an audience to tears, and that people left his assembly "drunken and bewildered (*wa-hum sukārā ḥayārā*)."[105] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī himself notes—with envy, I imagine—that at one of his grandfather's sermons three people died, overcome by excitement (*li-wajdihim*).[106] He proudly tells of sturdy men—such as the emir ʿAlī ibn al-Salār (d. 634/1236–7), leader of twenty *ḥajj* caravans—who wept throughout his own sermon.[107] In contrast, he gives a somewhat malicious account of what he considered to be an overly-long sermon of Nāṣiḥ al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, who substituted for him in the great mosque of Damascus while he was away. He reports that when Nāṣiḥ al-Dīn preached, "hearts remained unmoved, eyes remained dry."[108] Dry eyes were, for Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, an indication of the meager effect of an exhortation, while weeping was evidence of its success.

The phenomenon of weeping at public religious gatherings was not specific to the medieval Islamic context. William Christian, speaking of 'religious weeping' in early modern Spain, explains that "the pain, pious tenderness or sorrow that accompanied weeping were part of an economy of sentiment that could influence God," and were thought to provoke his mercy. Moreover, tears were thought to have a purgative effect on sins, as if they could wash them away.[109] From a different perspective, Berkey ascribes a social function to weeping at sermons—as a kind of safety valve, working (like the anecdotes quoted above) to ease the acceptance of social realities for those who may have had reasons to revolt against them. In his own wording: "The spirit of penitence…reminded listeners that true justice would be found only in eschatological times…but in the meanwhile, the underlying hierarchies went unchallenged."[110]

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[105] Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 39–43; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:239.

[106] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:415. Ibn al-Jawzī mentions the uninhibited expression of excitement and ecstasy (*wajd*) by women, who cry aloud "as if in labor," and sometimes throw off their upper garment and stand up (see Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 31). He also extols weeping and crying for one's sins (*ibid*., 48).

[107] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:579.

[108] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:701.

[109] Or, in a Muslim metaphor, serve as a shield from the fires of hell, and from eschatological punishment (Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 49). Christian, "Religious weeping," 97–98, 107.

[110] Berkey, "Storytelling," 71–72; *Popular Preaching*, 68, 49.

In the minds of medieval Muslims weeping was connected to piety through verse 17:109, and the example of well-known early ascetics (the *bakkāʾūn*), who either wept over their sins, or out of compassion for other sinners, realizing that he who is conscious of God and the final judgment cannot but "laugh less and weep more."[111] Al-Ghazzālī gives the preacher full license to weep in front of his audience. He writes that the words of the preacher who admonishes the common folk (*al-ʿāmma*) should come from the heart and enter the heart. In a more conventional tone, he suggested that the idea of divine retribution should be driven home with vivid examples of crime and punishment in this world.[112] He also recommended abundant quotation from the Qurʾān and *hadīth* and stories about the Prophet and the righteous men of old, along with recitation of poetry. Regarding the merits of including tales about the righteous in preaching, Ibn Qudāma claims that when preachers do no more than mention the *zuhhād*, the mercy of God is present, and hearts are calmed and reassured.[113] Ibn al-Jawzī's approach resembles al-Ghazzālī's. He instructs the *wāʿiẓ* to command the people to perform their basic religious obligations and to refrain from sin, but he also says that "a licit 'show' that draws the hearts of men is not to be censured (*al-taṣannuʿ al-mubāḥ li-istijlāb al-qulūb lā yuḍamm*)," and allows the preacher to raise his voice and display zeal in his warning and exhortation.[114]

The reception of admonition could sometimes depend on personal taste and circumstances, of which, when it comes to medieval men, we usually know next to nothing. Here is an exception, which also reveals the paradoxical (slightly masochistic?) attraction to exhortation: Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nīsābūrī, who once invited Nūr al-Dīn to his assembly of exhortation, opened with a direct appeal to the sultan. Nūr al-Dīn discreetly dispatched his chamberlain (*ḥājib*) to ask the preacher to refrain from calling out his name. Later he explained: "When al-Balkhī [another preacher] calls out '*Yā Muḥammad*' [Nūr al-Dīn's private name] every single hair of mine stands out of awe

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[111] "When it is recited to them…they fall down upon their faces weeping." See also Knysh, *Mysticism*, 17; Calasso, "La dimension religieuse," 41, 53.
[112] Pedersen, "The Islamic Preacher," 246–247.
[113] Makdisi, *Ibn Qudāma*, 15.
[114] Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's*, paras. 318, 321, 323.

for him, and my heart feels faint. But when al-Quṭb called out 'Yā Muḥammad' I was vexed, and my heart hardened."[115]

Dhahabī, in contrast, tells a strange tale of a *wāʿiẓ* who was too successful in provoking emotion, and inadvertently paid for it with his life. The anecdote appears in the biographical entry devoted to the Ṣūfī Shaykh Tāj al-Dīn Ḥasan b. al-ʿAdī (d. 644/1246–7), in order to illustrate the wild devotion and ignorance of the shaykh's Kurdish followers. The words of a *wāʿiẓ* (whom Dhahabī does not identify by name) once touched the shaykh's heart so deeply, that he wept and fainted. The worried and furious men around him attacked the preacher and beat him to death before their shaykh had a chance to recuperate.[116]

4.6. *Conclusions*

ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, Saladin's secretary, describes in detail the public celebration that was held in honor of the recovery of the Mosque of al-Aqṣā in 583/1187, in his history of the reconquest of Frankish territories. It was undoubtedly a remarkable event, which must have promoted an unusual atmosphere of concord among the Muslims who were present there, one not necessarily typical of less festive days. ʿImād al-Dīn's composition is also atypical: it is a jubilant, sophisticated poem, rather than a matter-of-fact report of historian. Yet his inventory of the groups of worshippers who gathered in the mosque of al-Aqṣā for the occasion, and his survey of their doings there, seem to authentically portray nearly the entire spectrum of acceptable forms of piety in late twelfth century Syria. It also reproduces the intrinsic pluralism and heterogeneity characteristic of the religious life of the Muslim community on 'regular' days too, in the bastion of 'official' Islam—the congregational mosque. The scene, which captures the inclusive character of the community, conveniently sums up the gist of chapters 1–4 of this book. ʿImād al-Dīn writes:

[115] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 48:272. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī explains that Quṭb al-Dīn was immersed in this world.

[116] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 55:247. The shaykh did not live long either: he was executed by the ruler of Irbil at the age of 53, probably because the latter feared his zealous followers.

> The call to prayer was pronounced... and the Qurʾān readers arrived, special prayers were read, the ascetic and the pious and the saintly men congregated, to worship the One and proclaim His unity... They prayed and prostrated themselves: dignitaries and ascetics, judges and witnesses, fighters of *jihād* and those struggling in God's way [Ṣūfīs], and pilgrims... The traditionalists recited, the preachers consoled, the scholars conferred and the jurisconsults disputed, the storytellers narrated and the traditionalists transmitted *ḥadīth*. The pious ascetics performed their devotions, and the exegetes gave their commentary...[117]

The congregational mosques of Syrian towns emerge as truly popular and vibrant institutions, accommodating a loosely organized body of faithful, men, women and children. Competing visions of Islam coexisted on the precincts of mosques, with occasional outbursts of friction between partisans of different schools of law and contradictory theological views, Ṣūfīs and their adversaries, and rival factions of notables. Notwithstanding the efforts of *ʿulamāʾ* to secure and enhance the sacred character of the edifice of the mosque, mosques served as asylums for the homeless, Qurʾānic schools for boys, and the preferred haunts for the beggar.

An extensive network of mosques of all sizes took shape in sixth/twelfth-seventh/thirteenth century Syria, sponsored by rulers and members of the urban and military elites, and by humble shopkeepers and artisans. Mosque-attendance, for an array of devotional, educational, social, judicial and political purposes was widespread both in the cities, and in their rural peripheries. Most mosques were, probably, administered by the supervisor of the endowments that sustained them (*nāẓir al-awqāf*). While Ḥanbalīs and certain Ṣūfī groups formed self-supporting semi-autonomous congregations around neighborhood mosques, and seem to have managed their own affairs, there is little evidence of similar organization in wider social circles.

The mosque, with its institutional sermon and assemblies for Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* recitation, study, and other devotional practices, was, on the one hand, the main arena for the religious indoctrination of commoners by the learned. The personnel of the mosque, if we may judge from biographies and necrologies, were usually taken from the ranks of the pious and well educated, and fulfilled their missions adequately. We know of very few cases of protest against the mosque personnel, or against the supervisors of endowments of mosques, who,

[117] Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Fatḥ*, 62 (I owe this reference to Daphna Ephrat).

as mentioned above, seem to have been quite powerful. Rare also are the occasions seized by preachers or prayer leaders to criticize ruling authorities from their podiums, or to promote upheavals. On the other hand, commoners played an active role in shaping the ritual and the liturgical calendar observed in mosques, and in molding its atmosphere. *Ṣalāt al-raghāʾib*, the nocturnal supererogatory communal prayers of Rajab, were enthusiastically observed in mosques in Syria, Egypt and the Jazīra during the late sixth/twelfth or early seventh/thirteenth century, and drew great crowds despite the fierce opposition of leading scholars. Relics of sorts made their way into mosques, and became an integral part of local liturgy, as well as a major attraction for tourists and pilgrims.

The deep involvement of members of the Zangid and Ayyūbid ruling household in religious life comes into view when scrutinized at the arena of the mosque. They sponsored the construction of a legion of new mosques, the reconstruction of old ones, and the retrieval or appropriation of houses of prayer that had been utilized by the Franks—making the most of the ceremonial, symbolic and spatial aspects of those acts. Rulers seem to have been in close contact with preachers and prayer leaders in congregational mosques—having chosen them (usually from among the members of their own schools of law) in the first place—and maintained control over sermonizing. They interfered in cases of severe clashes between scholars of opposing groups, and between scholars and congregations, by denying certain scholars or congregations the right to preach, teach, or hold separate prayer assemblies.

Merlin Swartz finds that the assembly of exhortation (*majlis al-waʿẓ*), at least in sixth/twelfth century Baghdad, "was frequently an occasion for criticizing the political authorities, and sometimes a call for reforms that were inimical to their political interests."[118] I am unable to say the same of twelfth-thirteenth century Syrian *majāli*s. I have not found Syrian *wuʿʿāẓ* frequently critical of political authorities, nor calling for a reformed society. They did, of course, call for reformed individuals: penitent, God-fearing, kind to their neighbors, ready to enlist for *jihād*. Here, my findings are not compatible with those of Jonathan Berkey, regarding popular preaching in the Islamic Middle Period, either. Berkey concludes, that "on a variety of levels:

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[118] Swartz, "The Rules," 224.

that of topic ... that of authority ... and that of personnel ... the tradition of popular preaching and storytelling found itself in conflict with the disciplined transmission of religious knowledge and texts (what we might label, in the most tentative terms, 'higher education')."[119] According to my interpretation, in Zangid and Ayyūbid Syria, *majālis al-waʿẓ* were in the hands of men who were themselves involved in higher education, often in *madrasa*s, and whose sources of income and prestige bound them to local rulers and urban elites.[120] In the course of their preaching they transmitted the canonical collections of *ḥadīth*, presented conventional Qur'ān exegesis, quoted standard devotional treatises, and sometimes even discussed theological matters, presenting 'orthodox' views. Performing in front of diverse audiences, *wuʿʿāẓ* functioned as mediators between various social groups, and between literary religious culture and 'lay' commoners. Their agenda, so I argue, was securely 'mainstream'.

Aside from personal piety, topics that loomed large in *majālis al-waʿẓ* of Ayyūbid times, were the consensual revivification of Sunnī Islam (*iḥyāʾ al-sunna*) and the anti-Frankish *jihād* movement. The preachers, who usually had snug relationships with contemporary rulers, rarely propagated rebellious, reformatory, or even contested ideas. Some sources preserve scant evidence of men who preached dissent and sectarian currents, but these seem to me to be outside the category of *wuʿʿāẓ*, and will be discussed in the last chapter of the book. The lesser, itinerant, or neighborhood-mosque preachers (with whom we made acquaintance earlier in this chapter)—to paraphrase Berkey's very eloquent assessment of the role of 'popular Ṣūfīs' in Mamlūk society—were held in considerable esteem by their audiences, not because they represented for them resistance to dominant Islamic authorities, nor did they represent a sought after challenge to the authority of the more institutional *ʿulamāʾ*. Rather, they were esteemed because they were taken as advocates of proper Islamic piety, a way of life in full accordance with the prescriptions of the *sharīʿa*.[121]

By examining the overlapping spiritual, edifying, entertaining, social and political dimensions of the exhortation by a great 'revivalist'

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[119] Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 20.

[120] The *wāʿiẓ* Ibrāhīm b. Muẓaffar (d. 620/1223) was even appointed as head of a *dār al-ḥadīth* that was established in Mosul (Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 53:100).

[121] See Berkey, "Popular Culture," 143.

preacher like Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, we understand what was it that made *majālis al-waʿẓ* into major communal events, with the capacity to draw Muslims of limited education and lower social strata with members of the military ruling elite, as well as the religious and administrative elite. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī and some of his colleagues could build up social solidarity and political unity, at least momentarily. They also played an important role in mobilizing rulers and enlisting citizens to the common cause of the counter-crusade, emphasizing its religious dimension, and placing it within the more comprehensive ideology of *iḥyāʾ al-sunna*. Themes of renewal through personal penance (*tawba*), and through the collective revivication of the Sunna, were also combined into these addresses.

PART TWO

THE CEMETERY (*AL-MAQBARA*), MAUSOLEUM (*TURBA*) AND SHRINE (*MASHHAD*)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CEMETERY

This chapter attempts to take the reader, as it were, along the roads leading to the medieval Syrian cemetery and through its gates, to observe and discuss funerals and burial rites, the etiquette of mourning, the care for the perpetuation of the memory the dead in this world, and the securing of their well-being in the hereafter. The discussion will entail a study of notions of the reciprocal relationship between the living and the dead, of practices emanating from these notions, and of scholarly debates concerning those beliefs and practices.

In the face of death—when established codes of behavior are likely to collapse—both composed pious conduct, in accord with religious law and social norms, and spontaneous unrestrained outbursts of grief and rage—appear simultaneously. Wild and even violent behavior may occur in cemeteries, exposing social tensions and divides, and giving rise to conflict and schism. Most societies, and the society we are dealing with is no exception, have developed mechanisms and institutions to control the anger of the bereaved and restrain their behavior, primarily by providing them with more-or-less conventionalized and predictable ways to manifest sorrow. Ceremonies are placed in the hands of specialists, and ritual proceedings are standardized.[1] Yet, while resorting to communal, as opposed to private control of rites may help the community to deal with death and contribute to social cohesion, it may also create a new set of tensions.[2] Some of these standard procedures and disruptive tensions, as reflected in works dealing with religious law and in descriptions of actual incidents in and around the cemetery, will be explored here.

[1] Palgi and Abramovitch, "Death," 395–396; Mandelbaum, "Social Uses," 190, 209–213. Goitein suggests that the routinization of rites of mourning was intended also for the opposite purpose—namely to assure that even "heartless people who neglected the duties of filial piety or family affection" fulfill their duty towards the dead (Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 5:174).

[2] Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 23–35.

5.1. *Funeral and Burial*

Anthropologists ascribe several roles to funerary rites. They include the consolation and strengthening of bereaved relatives, the rehabilitation of the community that has been disrupted by death, and the exercise of a mechanism of social control: the deceased and his family are rewarded by various honorary measures if found deserving by social standards, or degraded and punished, if found to have been offensive to society.[3] In the eyes of medieval men who participated in the ceremonies that took place between death and burial, the most important role of funerary rites was, undoubtedly, influencing the fate of the deceased in the afterworld. For Muslims, favorable results of this endeavor had been promised by the Prophet himself, in sayings such as: "Whenever forty men who do not engage in polytheism pray for the dead, God will accept their intercession on his behalf."[4]

From another perspective, focusing on discourse rather than on social history, the descriptions of funerals are rich and telling source material. Alexander Knysh's comparison of conflicting accounts of the funeral of the Ṣūfī Shaykh Muḥyi al-Ḍīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) illustrates this point. While the reports of Ibn al-ʿArabī's contemporaries are sympathetic but matter-of-fact, and devoid of any dramatic embellishments, later historians, well aware of the "symbolic potential of the funeral scene," and immersed in the great debate over the Shaykh, inflate the scope and impact of the event. In the descriptions of Ibn al-ʿArabī's supporters, his funeral reflected his exalted saintly status. The descriptions of hostile historians give the impression that the deceased shaykh was an imposter.[5] Yet, despite the polemical overtones of funeral scenes in medieval Islamic literature, I suggest we not neglect their value as repositories of information about real modes of behavior, social relations and religious beliefs. That indeed is the assumption guiding the following pages.

The funeral (*jināza*, or *janāza*) of a well-known figure in the Muslim community was a lengthy affair, in the course of which prayers were repeated again and again, the Qurʾān was recited, and sermons were delivered. Qurʾān-reciters (*muqriʾūn*) passed in front

[3] Rubin, *End of Life*, 43–44, 116–118.
[4] Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 4:2508. Other versions count a hundred Muslims, or three rows of men in prayer.
[5] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 30–34.

of the bier, raising their voices in tearful lamentation all the way to the congregational mosque. There, in most cases, the prayer for the dead (*ṣalāt al-janāʾiz*, or *al-ṣalāt ʿalā al-mayyit*) was performed, and only later did the procession continue to the cemetery.[6]

The funerary procession of ʿImād al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (d. 614/1218), one of the best-loved Ḥanbalī shaykhs of the al-Ṣāliḥiyya suburb of Damascus, was almost 2.5 miles long ("from the top of Mt. Qāsyūn to the gate of al-Farādīs"). It proceeded slowly from sunrise till sundown, all the way to the great mosque in intra-muros Damascus, and back again, uphill, to the cemetery on Mt. Qāsyūn.[7] The Ayyūbid sultan al-Malik al-ʿĀdil died in the same year. During his funeral, the narrow alleys of Damascus were so congested that the carriers of the bier had a hard time getting to the cemetery.[8] In 643/1245, the year of the death of the *muftī* Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī, the city lay under siege. As the cemetery of Maqābir al-Ṣūfiyya was situated beyond the city walls, less than ten men were present at the actual interment, but the preceding funerary procession was as large and as dignified as ever, and the crowd stopped several times along the way to pray for the deceased.[9] The choice of a long and slow course for the funerary procession enabled more mourners to join along the way, and postponed, as it were, the separation from the dead.

Naturally, most of our information about funerals pertains to those of 'important' men, whose deaths were quickly communicated to everyone (even though the public announcement of death, *al-īdhān bi-l-mayyit wa-ishārat mawtihi bi-l-nidāʾ*, was controversial among scholars),[10] those whose absence indeed made a difference to the community. However, given the significance of the religious obligation to see to the proper burial of the dead, and the social function of the gathering for this purpose, members of the elite were not the only ones to be interred in a mass funeral.

In the legal literature, attending funerals is defined as *sunna* (a religious norm), or *farḍ kifāya*.[11] The washing and shrouding of the

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[6] See Ibn Jubayr's description of funerals in Damascus in 580/1184, Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 294; trans. in Broadhurst, *Travels*, 308.

[7] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 104.

[8] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 132.

[9] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 176; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23:143.

[10] Most *ʿulamāʾ* approved, reasoning that it enlarged the number of supplicators (al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 196).

[11] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:395; al-Nawawī, *al-Aḥkām*, 2:959–60; Tritton, "Djanāza," 442.

body, the carrying of the bier, the burial and the performance of the prayer for the dead are religious obligations incumbent on the community as a collective (i.e. *farḍ kifāya*). In other words, not every individual is obliged to perform them, nor is their performance limited to the confines of the family or clan. The common notion that accompanying the dead to their final rest-place is a pious deed is reflected in biographical literature, in the lists of merits attributed to devout men. For example, in praise of the Ḥanbalī Shaykh Abū ʿUmar (d. 607/1210), it was said that he cared for the needy, visited the sick and buried the dead. A specific example of his conduct in this last matter is given in an anecdote told by the muezzin ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Jaryūtī. Al-Jaryūtī eulogizes Abū ʿUmar, mentioning that the elderly and frail shaykh walked a long distance on a very hot day in order to attend the funeral of his (al-Jaryūtī's) mother, and pray for her.[12] In the contemporaneous Jewish society portrayed in the Genizah documents, when an old solitary man died, "the local people, old and young, left their work until they had laid him to rest," and even scholars were expected to leave their studies.[13]

A large and rowdy Damascene crowd escorted Shaykh Yūsuf al-Kamīnī *al-muwallah* ('fool for God') to the grave in 657/1259. Ibn Kathīr (and other *ʿulamāʾ*) did not take kindly to al-Kamīnī, considering him insane and unclean. Nevertheless, he was venerated by many "commoners and others (*min al-ʿawāmm wa-ghayrihim*)," who held him to be a holy man in possession of esoteric knowledge.[14] His corpse was carried by the people on their bare hands all the way up to Mt. Qāsyūn, amidst noise and bustle (which the chronicler Ibn Kathīr deemed as abominable behavior).[15]

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[12] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Aḥwāl al-Imām Abī ʿUmar*, fol. 121a.

[13] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 5:156. Maimonides says: "The study of the Law is suspended for the duty of joining a funeral procession...if there is not a sufficient number present [to pay the deceased their last respects]" (*The Code*, 3:200–202 (Mourning, 14/9)).

[14] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:317; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23:302–3; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:683.

[15] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:298. Prescriptions for proper behavior during funerals are given by al-Nawawī (*al-Adhkār*, 203, 205), who urges his reader not to be deterred from following them by the fact that hardly anybody does. He says that one should be contemplative, and refrain from impious thought or speech (better still—be silent altogether). After the funeral one should engage in Qurʾān recitation, *duʿāʾ* for the deceased, exhortations and stories about the righteous (*ḥikāyāt ahl al-khayr wa-aḥwāl al-ṣāliḥīn*). See also Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:394–400.

The funeral of *al-mughassil* (washer of dead bodies) al-Ḥājj al-Qabāqibī (d. 663/1265) is said to have been "grand, assembling people of all sorts, elite and common-folk," with orphans and others reciting, pleading and weeping for him. Al-Qabāqibī was known in Damascus thanks to his generosity towards the needy, as well as his somewhat eccentric custom of standing in the doorway of the great mosque as soon as the morning prayers were over, and offering a loud supplicatory prayer on behalf of all Muslims.[16] Otherwise, he must have been a simple man, as his profession and his honorific epithet indicate: the title *ḥājj* is a valuable one, but is not normally mentioned in the biographical dictionaries for persons bearing other honorary attributes or offices.

The most significant part of the funeral was the prayer for the dead—*ṣalāt al-janāʾiz*. It is considered essential for the wellbeing of the deceased; so much so, that scholars considered opening the grave if the prayer had, for some reason, not been performed.[17] Some people requested in their wills that a certain person say the prayer for them. The elderly grammarian al-Kindī, a Ḥanbalī who turned to the Shāfiʿīyya during his student years in the *madrasa* of Sultan Tughril in Hamadhān, asked his former fellow-Ḥanbalī Muwaffaq al-Dīn to recite the prayer for the dead for him when his time came.[18] Al-Malik al-Muḥsin Yamīn al-Dīn, a son of Saladin and a slave-girl who relinquished the garb of a soldier to become a scholar of *ḥadīth*, requested the *qāḍī* Ibn ʿUlwān, to say the prayer for him.[19]

The prayer for the dead was usually performed in the mosque or in the cemetery. Contrary to all other formal prayers, *ṣalāt al-janāʾiz* is conducted standing upright, with no bodily gestures. The *imām* praises God, then says the 'Abrahamic prayers'—"O God, bless Muḥammad and his family as You had blessed Abraham and his family, bless Muḥammad and his family as You had blessed Abraham and his family in the two worlds. You [alone] are worthy of praise and of glory."[20] He adds a supplication (*duʿāʾ*) for the deceased, and recites

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[16] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 235. He was buried in the cemetery of Bāb al-Ṣaghīr.

[17] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:406–410. See Zaman, "Death, Funeral," 46–47, for *ḥadīth* regarding the influence of praising the dead on his prospects in the afterlife.

[18] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:38

[19] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 3:1258–59.

[20] Monnot, "Ṣalāt," 929.

the final salutation. The *duʿāʾ* does has no fixed formula, but there are traditional texts to choose from. It may be as short as two or three words (*Allāhumma, ighfir lahu*—God, forgive him; *alṭif bihi*—be benevolent towards him; or simply *raḥimahu Allāhu*—may God have mercy upon him), or long and poetic and quite beautiful.[21] A touching example of a personal and rather unusual invocation was that of the preacher Ibn al-Najiyya (d. 599/1203). He spoke at the funeral of his son, who must have been a mischievous type (*aḥdatha fī sabīl Allāhi*), saying: "O God, this son of mine was eighteen years of age. For fifteen years he has committed no evil. Three remain, half of which were spent in slumber. A year-and-a-half remain, in the course of which he wronged me and You. I have already forgiven him for his sins towards me. His sins towards You remain. Have mercy on him for my sake."[22]

A detailed account of the performance of *ṣalāt al-janāʾiz* in the great mosque of Damascus, and of the sermons that followed, appears in Ibn Jubayr's travelogue. The preachers (*wuʿʿāẓ*) stepped up in order of their rank, to deliver words of exhortation, consolation and poetry. Whenever a dignitary arrived at the ceremony—and it is noteworthy that dignitaries made it their business to show up—a crier would announce his entry, using flowery honorific titles such as Sadr al-Dīn (The First of religion), Shams al-Dīn (the Sun of Religion) Badr al-Dīn (The Full Moon of Religion), etc. For religious scholars he would use the high-flown Sayyid al-ʿUlamāʾ (Master of the Learned), Jamāl al-Aʾimma (Glory of the Scholars), Ḥujjat al-Islam (Proof of Islam), Fakhr al-Sharīʿa (Pride of the Law).[23] Ibn Jubayr considered this a strange custom, typical of the arrogance of the people of Syria. A slightly more anthropological approach than his may suggest that those people of Syria were not driven merely by ego, but also by the need to emphasize the 'normal' social order and the basic cultural structures in a society disrupted by death. Also, from an anthropological perspective,[24] the pomp of the funerary rites can be viewed as a means by which the community rewards its notables upon death, stressing their social status, titles and assets.

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[21] Monnot, "Ṣalāt," 931; Gardet, "Duʿāʾ," 617. For a detailed account of *ṣalāt al-janāʾiz* see al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 196–202.
[22] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 1:439.
[23] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 294–65; trans. in Broadhurst, *Travels*, 308–309.
[24] See p. 151 n. 1 for references.

The community could also punish—by denying those honors, and, in extreme cases, by refusing to perform the prayer for the dead. Thus, even though the *sharīʿa* does not prohibit praying for a suicide,[25] most of the *ʿulamaʾ* of Damascus refused to pray for their colleague ʿĪsā b. Yūsuf al-Gharrāfī (d. 602/1206), who had hanged himself in the western minaret of the great mosque.[26] In a similar vein, Shaykh Abū Muḥammad of al-Qarāfa in Cairo refused to rise to his feet when the coffin of a homosexual passed by.[27] In biographies of ruthless rulers or members of the ruling elite it is sometimes stated that "there were few people who invoked mercy upon him."[28] In a ferocious attack against the practice of a method of divination and consultation by the manipulation of 'dots and points' of the Qur'ānic text (*al-naqṭ wa-l-shakl*),[29] the *muftī* ʿImād al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yūnus of Irbil asserts that the knowledgeable Muslim who believes in such things should be deprived of the prayer for the dead and of burial among Muslims.[30]

The *talqīn*—reminding (or instructing) the deceased of the basics of religion, so that he will know how to answer when the angels of destruction interrogate him, was another essential component of the ceremonies connected to one's transition to the afterworld. *ʿUlamāʾ* were not quite in agreement regarding the right timing of *talqīn*. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī claims that *talqīn* is intended for the dying rather than for the dead, and therefore should be performed at the deathbed. Ibn Qudāma, less explicit, states that he found no evidence to support the performance of *talqīn* after burial, neither in the writings of Ibn Ḥanbal, nor in those of the other founders of the schools of law.[31] In al-Nawawī's opinion the *talqīn* should be recited in the cemetery, immediately after burial. He recommends a long version, composed by Abū al-Fatḥ al-Maqdisī. Its words are most certainly intended for

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[25] Tritton, "Funerary Customs," 657; Kohlberg, "Views on Martyrdom," 28–29.

[26] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 54–55. For other cases of suicide in thirteenth century Damascus, see Pouzet, *Damas*, 391.

[27] Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 116. See the many early examples of boycotts of funerals in Zaman, "Death", 29–36.

[28] See Diem, *The Living*, 2:105.

[29] About symbolic interpretation of the dots and crowns over the letters of the Arabic alphabet, see Canteins, "Hidden Sciences," 461.

[30] Ibn al-Mustawfī, *Taʾrīkh Irbil*, 1:1120.

[31] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 426; Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:437.

the living, at least as much as they were intended for the dead, to warn and console at the same time:

> Our [Shāfiʿī] companions say: a man should sit by the grave at the head of the deceased and say: O So and So, or, O Servant of God son of the Maid of God, remember the faith by which you are leaving this world, the testimony that there is no god but God alone, he has no partner, and Muḥammad is his servant and messenger. Heaven is real, and Hell is real, and the resurrection of the dead is real, without doubt, and God shall revive the dwellers of the graves. You have accepted God as your Lord, Islam as your religion, Muḥammad as your prophet, the Qur'ān as your guide (*imām*), the *kaʿba* as your direction of prayer (*qibla*) and the faithful as your brothers. Put your trust in God, before whom there is no other. He is the Lord of the great regal throne.[32]

In a ritual that expresses the combined religious and social significance of the funeral, *takbīr* ("Allāh is the greatest") is recited four times at the head of the bier in the case of a man, at its foot at the case of a woman—either at the mosque, or in front of the dead man's house. After the first—the *fātiḥa* is recited, after the second—the prayer for the Prophet, after the third—supplication (*duʿā'*) for the dead, and after the fourth—for those present.[33] Thus, the community does its best for the deceased, and 'scores' God's mercy and reward for the living.

ʿUlamā' criticized various customs they encountered in funerals. Abū Shāma complains of several digressions from religious stipulations, writing that: "There are many unwarranted innovations (*bidaʿ*) in the conduct of funerals nowadays, that are contrary to the *sunna*. The obligation to perform the burial as soon and as quickly as possible is disregarded, people raise their voices, indulge in melodic recitation of the Qur'ān (*qirā'a bi-l-alḥān*), express pride in the attendants [their number and social status, most likely], do not contemplate death and afterlife, chat, amuse themselves, and talk about the property and the progeny that the deceased left behind him."[34]

Al-Nawawī voiced reservations on the repetition of the prayer for the dead during a funeral, but he admits that there are three different scholarly opinions regarding this matter. He acknowledges that the larger the assembly, the better the chances of the deceased to benefit

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[32] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 46–48.
[33] Ibn Qudāma, al-Mughnī, 3:410–423; Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, 34–35.
[34] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 271–278.

from the intercession (*shafāʿa*) and the supplicatory prayers said on his behalf. However, in his opinion, once the prayer had been said, the burial should not be postponed, even if the delay anables for a group of latecomers to pray as well.[35] Apparently, this stand was not shared, or at least not practiced, by some other scholars. At the funeral of Ibn al-Anmaṭī (d. circa 619/1221), who was considered to have been one of the most learned scholars of *ḥadīth* in Damascus in his generation, the Ḥanbalī Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma led the prayer for the dead in the great mosque, the Shāfiʿī Fakhr al-Dīn ibn ʿAsākir repeated it by the gate of al-Miṣr, and the Ḥanafī *qāḍī al-quḍāt* (head of the judges) Jamāl al-Dīn al-Miṣrī said it for the third time by the grave in Maqābir al-Ṣūfīyya.[36]

"The Qurʾān recitation of some of the ignoramuses in funerals in Damascus, who stretch [the syllables] in an abominable manner, sing them more than they should, insert extra syllables into some of the words, and so forth" was another cause for scholarly attack.[37] Al-Nawawī, like Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn quoted above, claims that these are offensive customs, forbidden by the consensus of the *ʿulamāʾ*. He urges those in authority to reprimand any Muslim who performs them, and correct him, but does not object to recitation if done properly. He considered *sūrat yāsīn* (36) and *al-baqara* (2) as most appropriate for funerals.[38] The Egyptian ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿUthmān (d. 615/1218) explains, in his pilgrimage guide, why *yāsīn*—the *sūra* he crowns as the core of the Qurʾān: "The man who recites *yāsīn* hopes that God bestows on him forgiveness and a reward as great as that of the man who had recited the Qurʾān twelve times."[39] Al-Shayzarī

[35] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 48–49; Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 519. Actually, most *ʿulamāʾ* agree that the prayer of just four men suffices (Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:394–400; al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 196).

[36] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 131; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:40; Pouzet, *Damas*, 389. See discussion of this custom below.

[37] Medieval and modern scholars object to melodic recitation mainly because it may distort the precise rhythmic and phonetic patterns of the divine text. They especially warn against the common mistake of lengthening syllables beyond their given duration (Nelson, *The Art*, 177–179). Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr dedicates a whole page to the condemnation of *qirāʾa bi-l-talḥīn*, and some other scholars deal with it at length as well (*al-Mathal*, 153). See also Fierro, "Treatises," 211–213; Nelson, *The Art*, 183.

[38] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 22; *ibid*., *al-Adhkār*, 204; Meri, "Ritual and the Qurʾān," 494. In modern Egypt, Qurʾān-reciters who make their living in cemeteries are considered to be the most ignorant of their kind (Nelson, *The Art*, 223 n. 37).

[39] Ohtoshi, "Manners," 26.

(d. 589/1193), in his manual for the *muḥtasib*, says that Qurʾān-reciters should be barred from attending funerals unless invited by relatives, and should not receive a salary.[40] These may be late repercussions of the earlier debate over the permissibility of reciting the Qurʾān during the prayer over the bier.[41]

The participation of professional mourning women in funerals was, for scholars, a favorite target for rebuke. Lamentation and wailing (*niyāḥa*), strictly a women's activity, was considered to be contemptible and prohibited by the *sharīʿa*,[42] to the extent that some scholars oppose the presence of all women in funerals.[43] We may conjecture that they disapproved of female presence both because of their concern for the segregation of the sexes, and because women—and this is an almost universal phenomenon—express grief in a louder and more extroverted manner than men. Moreover, in their lamenting, women may voice gender-specific protests against women's personal misfortune and destiny, and against male dominated institutions and discourses.[44] Lamenting was, potentially, demoralizing and threatening.[45] That was probably why an Egyptian Jew, who had wanted his funeral to be as simple as possible, asked that mourning women be kept away.[46] In contrast, a wealthy Jewish woman, who died in Fusṭāṭ in 1141, and apparently had not wished for a plain funeral

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[40] He does allow them to accept gifts (Shayzarī, *Nihāyat al-Rutba*, 113; trans. in Buckley, *The Book*, 130).

[41] For details about this disagreement see Halevi, "The Paradox," 134–135. Halevi finds that by the late third/eighth century liturgical (or quasi-liturgical) uses of the Qurʾān had become an integral part of ritual at cemeteries (*ibid*., 129).

[42] Fahd, "*Niyāḥa*," 64–65. Al-Ghazzālī considers "spending money on a hired female mourner" wasteful, and therefore objectionable (translated in Buckley, *The Book*, 182).

[43] Goldziher, *Studies*, 1:229, Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb al-Bidaʿ*, 130–131; Shayzarī, *Nihāyat al-Rutba*, 110; Tritton, "Funerary Customs," 655. For examples of restrictions imposed upon female activity in Egyptian cemeteries from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries, see Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, 69.

[44] Rosenblatt, *Grief and Mourning*, 21–28; Greenblatt, "Shapes of Memory," 57–58; Abu Lughod, "Gendered Discourses," 187–205.

[45] Davidson, "Women's Lamentations," 131–133, 142–143. Abu Lughod suggests a different understanding, saying: "It is tempting to treat these women's moving discourses on death as counter discourses...the problem is that...where women lament...and men instead invoke God's will as they say 'pull yourself together' and pray over the body—[the mourning scene becomes] an important means by which women publicly enact their own moral, and ultimately social, inferiority" (Abu Lughod, "Gendered Discourses," 203).

[46] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 4:160.

at all, preferred Muslim wailing women to their Jewish colleagues. Presumably, they were louder and made a bigger impression.[47]

5.2. *Strife in the Cemetery*

In one of the biographical entries of his dictionary of Shāfiʿī scholars, Tāj al-Dīn Subkī reveals how social tensions and ideological rivalries in a town in northern Syria rose to the surface during a funeral that was held there in the middle of the seventh/thirteenth century. A group of the town's dignitaries attended: the *qāḍī*, the *khaṭīb* and the governor sat on one side of the burial pit, while a well-known Ṣūfī shaykh sat on the other side with his disciples (*fuqarāʾ*). When the *qāḍī* and the governor rose to speak, they mentioned the "wondrous deeds of the friends of God" (*karāmāt al-awliyāʾ*) in a disrespectful manner, disclaiming their validity. Afterwards, when people were paying their condolences to members of the bereaved family, many came to greet the shaykh. At this point, a 'showdown' between the shaykh and his adversaries took place, leaving no skeptics about the powers of the friends of God.[48] The fervent belief in the capacities of 'the friends of God' almost led to a riot at the very beginning of the funerary rites in honor of the saintly Shaykh Abū ʿUmar. When his corpse was being washed at dusk, men scurried to dip their turbans in the water that had touched his body. Women dipped their scarves. The shroud of his cousin, Shaykh ʿImād al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, who died several years later, was spared from looting only thanks to the presence of soldiers at the funeral.[49]

Even more threatening was exhumation—a terrible act of vengeance, exercised, in medieval society, on particularly hateful enemies, or as an outlet of rage in cases of urban strife. The following unusual story seems to indicate a combination of both. The historian Ibn al-ʿAdīm heard from a certain Abū Ṭālib al-Qayyim, that one night, after the burial of the Shīʿī poet Ibn al-Munīr al-Ṭarābulsī (d. 548/1153), a group of the [Sunnī] *aḥdāth* (riffraff) of Aleppo went to the cemetery, intending to open his grave. They wanted to check whether

[47] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 5:152.
[48] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:412–13. For an English translation of this anecdote (taken from al-Yūnīnī's version), see Meri, *The Cult*, 75.
[49] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 73, 104.

he had turned into a pig—as befits one who had cursed the caliphs Abū Bakr and ʿUmar during his lifetime.[50] Lo and behold, a pig was indeed found in the grave, and it was facing north (i.e. opposed to the *qibla*)! At first they laid it on the edge of the grave for all to see, but later they decided to burn it, and cover up the grave. Ibn al-ʿAdīm ends this report with his typically cautious, if not skeptical, "*Allāhu aʿlam*"—God knows best.[51]

In a more factual manner, Abū Shāma mentions the corpse of another Shīʿī, mutilated in Damascus in the course of sectarian riots. On Rabīʿ al-Thānī 596/February 1200, the people, who rose against the Shīʿīs (*kāna qiyām al-ʿāmma ʿalā al-Shīʿa*), went out to Bāb al-Ṣaghīr, exhumed a corpse and hanged its head with two dead dogs.[52] In 641/1243 the body of the *qāḍī* ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd al-Waḥīd al-Rafīʿī, a notoriously corrupt man, was cast out among the graves of the Jews and Christians, to be eaten by dogs.[53] In Irbil, followers of the Ṣūfī shaykh Ḥasan b. ʿAdī (d. 644/1246–7) desecrated the grave of his rival, Shaykh Abū Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ḥaddād, and burnt his remains. This, according to the historian of Irbil Ibn al-Mustawfī (d. 637/1239), was the last in a series of atrocities that resulted from the extreme enmity of Ibn al-ʿAdī's wild Kurdish followers towards Shaykh Ibn Ḥaddād.[54]

Najm al-Dīn al-Khabūshānī (d. 587/1191), the pious scholar who advised Saladin to establish a *madrasa* next to the mausoleum of al-Shāfiʿī in Cairo (or, according to other sources, established it himself), is said to have demanded the exhumation of an adjacent grave. It was the grave of the Ḥanbalī Ibn al-Kizānī, who was accused of anthropomorphism, and therefore considered by that zealous Ashʿarī, al-Khabūshānī, as a heretic (*zindīq*), who could not remain buried next to the righteous *imām*.[55]

Jalāl al-Dīn Khwarizmshāh, killed by a Kurdish peasant in the vicinity of Mayyāfāriqīn in 628/1231, was secretly buried at night by his uncle, who worried that the body of this infamous vagabond-warrior

[50] Kohlberg, "*Imāmī* Shīʿī Views," 117.
[51] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 3:1164.
[52] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 16.
[53] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:163; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:750.
[54] Ibn al-Mustawfī, *Taʾrīkh*, quoted in Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 55:249, n. 8.
[55] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 4:239–240; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:15–16; Lev, "Piety," 302–306.

would be exhumed and desecrated. His grave remained anonymous.[56] Franks and Muslims desecrated bodies of their enemies in several cases,[57] and the funerals of Christians and Jews were sometimes the target of violent attacks by the Muslim mob.[58]

5.3. *Shrouds and Tombstones*

Legal literature pays some attention to the final earthly garments and final earthly abode of the believer, aiming to keep them as simple as possible, as a manifestation of humility before God and humbleness toward fellow men. Regular human beings found it hard to accommodate to scholarly prescriptions, both when planning their own retreat from this world, and that of their dear ones. "This exaggerated preoccupation with internment," explains Goitein, "seems to have been motivated by Jewish, Christian and Islamic beliefs in afterlife and in the resurrection of the dead, but, in particular, to the endeavor to hold social standing to the very last."[59] Legal literature that discusses the fulfillment of the will (*taqlīd al-waṣiyya*) may include an admonition of requests to be buried in silk, or in more than three layers, or in a garment that does not cover the whole body. Moreover, scholars demand that such wills be disregarded.[60] Ibn Qudāma, who explains that shrouding in more than three layers (five for a woman, according to most jurists) is reprehensible because it is wasteful, is obviously trying to counter a current norm.[61] Perhaps so is also Ibn ʿAsākir, in a moralizing tale about a *qāḍī* who intended to spend a thousand

[56] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:669. For more details about Jalāl al-Dīn Khwarizmshāh's death see Cahen, "La chronique," 139; Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 220.

[57] When the Muslims regained Tripoli in 688/1289, they exhumed the bones of the long dead Frankish governor and threw them to the dogs (Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:269). Franks opened graves and dragged the bodies of Muslims through the streets of Aleppo, when they finally broke into the city after the siege of 518/1124 (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7:3484; Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:126, 140).

[58] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:285.

[59] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 5:142.

[60] For *sharʿī* stipulations regarding shrouds, see al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 209; Tritton, "Funeral Customs," 653–55. Silk or gold-embroidered garments are also forbidden as shrouds in Jewish law (Maimonides, *The Code*, Mourning, 3/2).

[61] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:385. For Jewish testators' preoccupation with proper attire for burial, and the *halakhic* views on the matter, see Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 4:160, 188–189.

*dīnār*s for shrouds for his beloved daughter, but finally saved her from hellfire by spending most of that money on charity.[62]

People were concerned not only with the material aspect of garments intended as shrouds, but also with the symbolic religious properties of those very garments. Some Muslims took care to be buried in shrouds that were thought to hold that most pivotal resource of religious life—*baraka* (blessings).[63] An admirer of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī, for example, wished to be buried in the shaykh's mantle when his time came. The shaykh, who read his thoughts, offered it to him. As long as that lucky person was alive, the mantle made itself useful by clothing family members and friends who fell ill.[64] Nūr al-Dīn is said to have stipulated in his will that a gift he had received from Shaykh Arsalān be placed in his shroud,[65] while al-Malik al-Ashraf Mūsā spent 30,000 dirhams on a chick-pea sized bit of the sandal of the Prophet, a relic he had explicitly purchased to place in his burial shroud.[66] According to another anecdote, on his deathbed, al-Malik al-Ashraf rejected the elegant shroud suggested to him by his vizier, exclaiming in horror: "God forbid that you bury me in something from that wardrobe, it is fraught with wrongdoing!" Instead, he insisted upon an old mantle, barely worth several piasters, given to him by a poor and righteous Ethiopian, whom he had identified as one of the *abdāl* (holy men who uphold the earth). What added to the merits and the intercessory powers of that mantle in the eyes of al-Malik al-Ashraf was the fact that it had served its owner on twenty(!) pilgrimages to Mecca.[67]

After burial, tombs were usually marked with tombstones, in some cases—with monumental funerary architecture. Besides the self-evident need to distinguish one grave from another for the sake of visitors, tombstones helped the living remember the dead, and consequently work for their salvation. Tombstones perpetuate the name, ancestry and time of death of the deceased, and honor him by exhibiting his

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[62] Lev, *Charity*, 28.

[63] For a rich discussion of *baraka*, see Meri, "Aspects of *Baraka*." An early account of this concern is recorded by Ṭabarī, regarding the request of the Umayyad caliph Muʿawiya to be buried in a shirt he had received from the Prophet (Margoliouth, "Relics," 20).

[64] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:466.

[65] Meri, *The Cult*, 109.

[66] See translation of the whole anecdote in Meri, "Aspects of *Baraka*," 64.

[67] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:715.

social status and wealth, and by listing his virtues. By the erection of a proper tombstone, the living pay back some of their manifold debts to the dead. Those debts were not taken lightly by medieval men: Goitein, who found that the income of many Jewish families of the medieval Mediterranean drew from the pious foundations established by their ancestors, characterizes a society in which the dead were "providing for the daily needs of the living."[68] Patrick Geary, speaking of medieval European society, argues that the debt of the living, who often owe the dead their property, their names, and even counsel and advice (which are usually transmitted to them through dreams), is "so great as to threaten the receivers, unless balanced by equally worthy counter-gifts."[69]

Since early Islam, voices were repeatedly raised opposing tall and imposing mausolea, calling for leveling tombs to the ground (*taswiyat al-qubūr*), and even opposing the raising of a tablet with the name of the deceased engraved on it.[70] These voices, invoking the authority of the Prophet, who is said to have prohibited plastering and building in stone over the grave, were consistently ignored. Among twelfth century scholars, al-Kāsānī speaks adamantly against the squandering of money on tombstones, while Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī treats this digression leniently.[71] We find similar currents in the Jewish tradition. Talmudic scholars had been arguing against extravagant tombstones, particularly for men of saintly reputation, either out of concern for social equality, or because of their hostility to the veneration of the dead. Maimonides asserted that the graves of the righteous were not to be marked by any monument (*nefesh*) "since their words constitute their memory."[72] But, just as among their Muslim neighbors, those early opinions did not prevent the erection of 'handsome monuments'

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[68] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:120, 5:141.

[69] Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 77–90.

[70] There are also traditions claiming that he put a rock, or stones, on the grave of his foster brother in Medina (Diem, *The Living,* 2:255). See objections in Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb al-Bidaʿ*, 112.

[71] See Goldziher, *Studies*, 1:232; Tritton, "Djanāza," 442; Leisten, "Between Orthodoxy," 12–22; Halevi, "Paradox," 139–144, 149. Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya pick up those themes again in the fourteenth century (Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 181–82), as do later 'salafī' movements. See Raghib, "Les prémiers monuments," 21–36; Williams, "The Cult," 39–60.

[72] See Horowitz, "Speaking," 313.

(*tziyyun naʾeh* in Hebrew) on tombs in the middle ages, especially on tombs of saintly men.[73]

Qurʾānic passages were inscribed on most Muslim funerary steles, usually preceded by the *basmallāh* ("In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful"). Verses that mention death, the after-world and divine retribution were especially popular. Recurrent among those were the following verses: "God! There is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting. Slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth..." (2:255); "Every soul will taste of death; you shall surely be paid in full your wages on the Day of Resurrection..." (3:185); "Their God gives them good tidings of mercy from Him, and good pleasure; for them await gardens wherein is lasting bliss." (9:21); "All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid. O which of your Lord's bounties will you deny?" (55:26–27).[74]

Personal messages, in the grammatical first person, were engraved as well. The emir Mithqāl al-Jundār al-Nāṣirī, for example, wished to be remembered for taking part in the battle of Ḥiṭṭīn (Saladin's decisive victory over the army of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 583/1187), and in the reconquest of the coastal cities of Acre and Ascalon.[75] A member of the religious elite of that very generation, Abū al-Maʿālī Muḥyī al-Dīn, chief *qāḍī* of Damascus (d. 598/1202), made a similar request regarding his epitaph. He wished to be remembered for having delivered the first Friday sermon in Jerusalem after its return to Muslim hands in Rajab 583/1187.[76] In contrast, the polymath al-Harawī had made no attempt to exalt himself on his epitaph in Aleppo. His was a gloomy message to mankind, one he had formulated nine years prior to his death, in poetry and prose: "This is the tomb of the lonely stranger ʿAlī ibn Abī Bakr al-Harawī. He lived as a stranger and died lonely with no friend to eulogize him,

[73] Lichtenstein, *Ritual Uncleanness*, 154, 161. For a discussion of terminology, and of the development of commemorative architecture in the Muslim world (which is beyond the scope of this work), see Grabar, "The Earliest"; Taylor, "Reevaluating"; Raghib, "Les prémiers."

[74] See inscriptions from the cemetery of Bāb al-Ṣaghīr (forty of which date to the Zangid and Ayyūbid period), in Moaz and Ory, *Inscription*, 37–142. About the selection of verses, see *ibid*., 163. Halevi points out that some traditionists quote the Prophet prohibiting writing on tombstones (Halevi, "Paradox", 139–145).

[75] *RCEA*, 10:210.

[76] *RCEA*, 9:237. See pp. 101–102, above.

no intimate to weep for him, no family to visit him, no brothers to go to him, no child to look for him, no wife to mourn him. May God compensate him for his loneliness and pity the stranger's lot."[77] In another excerpt he proclaims: "I had walked through the deserts, been to countries, sailed the seas, saw many places, traveled to cities and villages and met people, but never have I seen a true friend, nor a faithful comrade. Whoever reads these lines is cautioned not be disappointed by anybody."[78]

The sorrow of the relatives of Sulaymān b. ʿAyn al-Dawla, who died in Damascus in 612/1216, was articulated by the phrase "This is the tomb of the youngster who was prevented from [enjoying] his youth (*al-munaghghas bi-shabābihi*)."[79] Some epitaphs on the graves of children or young people contain short prayers for those who had died prematurely, asking God to treat then leniently,[80] or to grant them compensation for the shortness of their lives. One such epitaph from early thirteenth century Damascus begs "May God have mercy upon his youth." An epitaph from Ḥamāh (678/1279–80), in a more elaborate style, says "May God...grant him His satisfaction and pardon in exchange for whatever pleasure he was deprived of, and may He make the shortness of his life in this world a reason for an eternal stay in His Garden, by Muḥammad, his family and his descendants."[81]

The inscription on the grave of Kamāl al-Dīn Mawdūd al-Shaghūrī al-Shāfiʿī (d. 612/1215) expresses the grief (sincere, or conventionalized) of his relatives. It includes a laudatory poem written by his kin Shihāb al-Dīn Fityān al-Shaghūrī, with the phrase: "we are weeping for you and for ourselves (*nabkī ʿalaika wa-ʿannā*)." The poem affected Abū Shāma and his teacher al-Sakhawī, who went out to the cemetery of Bāb al-Ṣaghīr to visit graves (*li-ziyārāt al-*

[77] As quoted in Crone and Moreh, *The Book of Strangers*, 165 (see references there).

[78] *RCEA*, 10:7–8 (my translation). See also Sourdel-Thomine, "al-Harawī al-Mawṣilī."

[79] *RCEA*, 10:108. On this expression, see Diem, *The Living*, 1:338–341.

[80] Which He is indeed expected to do, according to Muslim scholars, who generally held the opinion that children will enter paradise without interrogation (Diem, *The Living*, 1:426–427).

[81] Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (d. 596/1200) uses a similar formula in a letter of condolence to a man who had lost a son (Diem, *The Living*, 1:342–343). On parental love in Islamic medieval societies, and on the death of children as the severest affliction, see Giladi, "The child was small"; Diem, *The Living*, 1:432–444.

qubūr), stopped by Kamāl al-Dīn's grave and admired the lines of poetry inscribed on it. Al-Sakhawī pleaded for mercy on his behalf (*waqafa ʿalayhi mutaraḥḥiman*).[82] The inscription on the shrine of Shaykh Ḥayāt in Ḥarrān includes the date of the completion of the construction (592/1196, eleven years after the death of the shaykh), the names of the founder's two sons, the name of the supervisor of the work (the shaykh's nephew), and the customary request for heavenly mercy upon the deceased "and upon all the Muslims." The massive dimensions of the shrine[83] clearly indicate that it was expected to immediately become a site of pilgrimage—a topic which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

5.4. *Grief and Mourning*

Al-Malik al-Afḍal sat in the Umayyad Mosque during the three days of mourning for his father, Saladin.[84] Upon the death of the Ayyūbid sultan al-Malik al-ʿĀdil in 615/1218, his son, al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā, ripped his clothes and struck his head and face.[85] The people of Jerusalem manifested their grief and distress in similar ways on Muḥarram 1,616 (March 19th 1219), when they had heard al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā's decision to tear down the city walls and dismantle its fortifications. A terrible cry arose, "as if the Day of Resurrection had arrived," in Abū Shāma's words. Everyone, including women and girls, the elderly and the very young, went up to the Ḥaram, ripped their clothes and tore their hair out, mourning the foreseen desertion of the holy city, and anticipating their own exile.[86] Nevertheless, when al-Muʿaẓẓam himself passed away, even women who never left their homes (i.e. very chaste women) stood with their children at the foot of the citadel, in the streets and marketplaces, ripping their clothes and disheveling their hair. They lamented him for a full month.[87] Al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam was an especially popular ruler (despite his desertion of Jerusalem) thanks to his simple man-

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[82] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 90.
[83] See photographs of the shrine and inscription, in Rice, "A Muslim Shrine."
[84] Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns*, 394.
[85] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 112.
[86] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 115–116. For the political circumstances (the Fifth Crusade), see Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 164–165.
[87] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:649; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 112.

ner and his mingling with the common people.[88] That aside, a month was not unusual as a period of official mourning. It was observed in Baghdad, in 1203/599, in honor of Zummurudh Khātūn, the mother of the caliph al-Nāṣir.[89]

A fuller, sentimental account of mourning for a ruler is Bahā' al-Dīn's description of the reactions to Saladin's death in Damascus, the city that was regarded as his true hometown.[90] Here it is, in D.S. Richards' beautiful translation:

> This [27 Ṣafar 589/3 March 1193] was a day as has not befallen the Muslims since the loss of the rightly guided caliphs. The citadel, the city, the world was overwhelmed by such a sense of loss as God alone could comprehend . . . His son al-Afḍal held a session for condolences in the north vaulted hall and the citadel gate was barred for all except the elite of the emirs and the turbaned classes. It was a terrible day. Each man's grief, sorrow, tears and cries for help kept him from looking at anyone else. In the chamber there was a ban on any poet reciting or any divine or preacher delivering any words. His children came crying for help from people and men's hearts all but shrank away at their ghastly appearance. So things continued until the midday prayer. Then the task of washing and shrouding the body was taken up . . . He was carried out after the midday prayer on a bier covered with a cotton sheet . . . At the sight of him cries and great lamentations arose . . . The people were overwhelmed by a weeping and a wailing that distracted them from their prayer time. People delivered final benedictions over him in droves . . . Later that day [after the burial] his son al-Ẓāhir came down and condoled with the people for their loss and comforted their hearts . . . The following day he [al-Afḍal—Saladin's heir] held a public session to receive condolences and flung open the citadel gate to the jurists and *'ulamā'*. Orators delivered eulogies, but no poet declaimed. The session broke up at noon on this day, but people continued to come morning and evening to recite the Koran and say prayers for him.[91]

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[88] Ibn al-Wardī (d. 749/1348–9) describes his unassuming manner (as do other, earlier authors), adding that it gave rise to an idiom '*fa'alahu bi-l-mu'aẓẓamī*', meaning "did something without pomp or ceremonial—*bi-lā takalluf*" (Ibn al-Wardī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2:145).

[89] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt*, 8:513–514.

[90] On the special attitude of the Ayyūbids towards Damascus, see Humphreys, "Women," 41. He suggests that the Ayyūbids made Damascus into their most important funerary center, thereby rendering it "a kind of sacred city" for the dynasty (*ibid*., 48).

[91] Ibn Shaddād, *Sīrat al-Sulṭān*, 422; trans. in Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 244–45.

Generally speaking, *ʿulamāʾ* did not take kindly to such passionate expressions of grief. Specifically, the gestures of ripping clothes, disheveling and tearing out hair, striking and scratching one's face when in mourning, are listed by Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239), in his manual for the *muḥtasib*, as pre-Islamic customs that contradict the *sunna*. The wearing of black and blue cloths and exaggerated wailing and crying out loud are also on his list, along with the hope that the *muḥtasib* curb those practices.[92]

Unrestrained mourning may induce defiance towards God's decrees and is incompatible with the Islamic virtues of *ṣabr* (patience, endurance) and *al-riḍāʾ bi-l-qaḍāʾ* (willing acceptance of God's decrees). They may also imply lack of faith in the salvation of the deceased.[93] Yet, few men can live up to the ideals presented in the *ḥadīth*, in legal literature and in poetry, and in the accounts of exemplary figures in historical and biographical writings. Saladin, for example, as represented by his biographer Bahāʾ al-Dīn ibn Shaddād, wept silently, without saying a word to anyone, upon learning of his son's death from a letter delivered to him in the middle of the siege of Ṣafad.[94] His contemporary, the ascetic Yaʿqūb al-Khayyāṭ of Mt. Qāsyūn, reacted with similar self-possession at the funeral of his twenty-five year-old son: everyone wept out loud, while he was restrained and contemplative (*ṣābir muḥtasib*).[95] They both may have been out-doing the example of the Prophet (if one may say so), who is said to have wept for his son Ibrāhīm, as any bereaved father would. To those who expressed their amazement the Prophet said: "The eyes shed tears, the heart breaks, and [or: but] we shall say only what pleases our Lord." According to another version of the *ḥadīth*, one quoted by Ibn Qudāma, the Prophet simply explained that weeping (*bukāʾ*), in contrast with wailing, is not prohibited,[96] thus preserving the agenda

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[92] Ibn al-Athīr, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, *al-Mathal*, 2:154–155; Goldziher, *Studies*, 1:228–230, 235. For similar and additional complaints of scholars, see also Tritton, "Funeral Customs," 660; Fierro, "Treatises," 232–234.

[93] On restraining one's grief in the Jewish tradition, see Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 5:173–74.

[94] See Goldziher, *Studies*, 1:228–229; Pouzet, *Damas*, 395. Goldziher attributes scholars' opposition to professional mourners and to other extroverted expressions of grief to their pre-Islamic origins. It seems to me, however, that this alone is not a satisfactory explanation of phenomena of the seventh/thirteenth century, as they must have changed and acquired new meanings in the course of the centuries.

[95] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:732.

[96] Al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 186; also in Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:489.

of latter day scholars. Another tale about the Prophet portrays him weeping for the martyr Saʿd, who lost his life in one of the first battles, explaining that he will miss the man. But then he began to laugh—because, so he told the bewildered spectators, he saw Saʿd drinking the sweet water of Paradise.[97]

Al-Nawawī preaches restraint in the expression of grief in a *fatwā* answering the following query: "Is it true that the Prophet said that the deceased is tortured in hell on account of the wailing of the living, or the wailing of his relatives?"[98] He also mentions the reward due to the Muslim who accepts his loss—especially the loss of a child—without complaint, by quoting a dialogue between God and his angels. God inquires with the angels, who just took a young soul, how His servant, the bereaved father, reacted to the death of his son. The angels answer: "He has praised You and justified You (*istarjaʿa*) [probably by using the formula 'We are God's and to Him we return']," to which God replies: "Build him a house in Paradise."[99]

Down on earth, as recorded in a private letter, Muslim and Jewish colleagues rebuked the young Jewish court-physician Abū Zikrī b. Abī al-Faraj for his dramatic exaggeration of mourning customs. They also made him wash off the ashes he had smeared on his face upon receiving news of the death of his younger brother in the distant town of Haifa. One of the court officials who came to console him conveyed the following message from his master, the sultan al-Malik al-ʿAzīz (589/1193–595/1198): "Accept the loss of your brother as I did when my brother al-Malik al-Amjad died. The beloved one is a treasure deposited with us by God; the proprietor takes it back. What can you do?"[100]

The act of paying condolences (*taʿziya*) in medieval Muslim tradition is defined as commendable (*mustaḥabb*). Al-Ṭurṭūshī lists the old and young, male and female, as deserving consolation; the young woman by her relatives only. Al-Nawawī places the act of condoling in the category of 'commanding the good (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf*).' He argues that for the psychological welfare of the bereaved it should be

[97] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 70.

[98] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 51.

[99] Al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 184; Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:496. On attitudes of bereaved parents see Giladi, "The child was small," 377–382.

[100] Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 3:175–178. Jewish law also limits and constrains mourning (see Maimonides, *The Code*, 3:199 (Mourning, 13/10–11)).

done within three days of burial, and lays down several regulations concerning the conduct of the person who comes to condole.[101] Ibn Qudāma supplies that person with proper texts for the fulfillment of this task.[102] The paying of condolences to a *dhimmī*, an example of which we have just encountered, was contested among Muslim scholars.[103] On the Jewish side, Maimonides sounds rather ambivalent regarding the consolation of gentiles, saying: "We bury the dead of the heathens, comfort their mourners and visit their sick *in the interest of peace*" (the emphasis is mine).[104]

To return to our former subject, we can say that all in all, the *ʿulamāʾ*s long struggle against what they regarded as excessive expression of grief in the face of death was never very successful. This shortcoming was foretold by the *ḥadīth* that Goldziher quotes at the end of his seminal article on the veneration of the dead in Islam. The Prophet is said to have admitted, more than five centuries before the Ayyūbids had made their appearance on the scene of Islamic history, that: "there are four things among the customs of paganism which my community cannot give up: boasting of good deeds, finding fault with one another's descent, the belief that fertility (or rain) depends on the stars, and lamentation for the dead."[105]

5.5. *Visitation of Graves and Intercession for the Dead*

The endeavor to secure God's mercy and better the lot of the deceased in the afterworld did not end with the funeral. For years to come, contact with one's own dead, and with the prominent dead of earlier generations, was upheld through visits to cemeteries and pilgrimage to mausolea. I will look at prescriptions for, and practices of such visits, and at the motivations and expectations of those partaking in them. Few scholars, if any, opposed visits to the cemetery altogether; most agree that the Prophet's visit to his mother's tomb set an appropriate example.[106] Some scholars actually encouraged the believers to go

[101] Al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 190; al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb al-Bidaʿ*, 125.
[102] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:485.
[103] See Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:486, 495.
[104] Maimonides, *The Code*, 3:202 (Mourning, 14/12).
[105] Goldziher, *Studies*, 1:237.
[106] For a survey of the debate from the second to the ninth centuries see Meri, *The Cult*, 126–139; *idem*, "The Etiquette," 280; Diem, *The Living*, 1:22–45; Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 168–218.

and visit the graves of their dead relatives and teachers.[107] Patrick Geary, quoted above commenting on medieval perceptions of the debt of the living towards the dead, points out the social value of maintaining a continuous benevolent relationship with the dead: it serves social cohesion and articulates an image of social stability.[108] Muslim scholars may have shared some of these insights, but they preferred to acknowledge the religious value of remembering the dead (particularly the righteous among them), of praying on their behalf, and of recalling to memory the final hour.[109] The fact of death itself, omnipresent at the cemetery, was taken as sufficient exhortation ("*kafā bi-l-mawt mawʿiẓatan*)."[110] Hence, it was at the cemetery of Bāb al-Ṣaghīr that the Ḥanbalī pious scholar ʿImād al-Dīn used to spend long hours in special prayer (*duʿāa*) every Wednesday, asking for the forgiveness of sins, and for guidance and grace.[111]

Fridays, *ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā* (the festival concluding the *ḥajj*), *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* (the festival following the fast of Ramaḍān) and *Niṣf Shaʿbān* (the 15th of the month of Shaʿbān, held to be a time of divine mercy) were considered to be the best days for paying visits to the dead.[112] An indication of the prevalence of the custom of going out to cemeteries on the holidays may be found in a passage from al-Kāsānī's compilation of law, where he stipulates that "if the *imām* goes out to lead the holiday prayer in the cemetery he should appoint a substitute for himself, to pray with the ill and disabled (*aṣḥāb al-ʿilal*) that remain in town."[113] In his criticism of customs of mourning that were practiced in his times, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr condemns women

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[107] Visiting his dead shaykh's tomb was an expression of the filial devotion expected from a disciple (see Berkey, *Transmission*, 36).

[108] Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 14.

[109] See, for example, Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:517; al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 213.

[110] Diem, *The Living*, 2:110.

[111] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:49.

[112] Abū ʿUmar's weekly visit to the cemetery would take place on Friday afternoons (Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 71, 152). After his death, the Prophet related to one of his admirers in his sleep, that a visit to the shaykh's grave on Friday night is equivalent to seeing the *kaʿba* (Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:522). Al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā used to pray in the mausoleum of his uncle Saladin on Fridays (Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 1:226). The choice of Friday as the best time for a *ziyāra* is attributed to the Prophet (see Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 71).

[113] Al-Kāsānī, *Badāʾiʿ*, 1:280. Compare with *al-Mughnī*, 4:260, where ʿAlī reassures the weak and blind that he will appoint a substitute *imām* for the holiday-prayer in the mosque in Medina, while he himself leads the prayer out at the *muṣallā*.

who "set up tents in the cemeteries on holidays, turning assemblies for mourning (*majālis li-l-taʿāzī*) into celebrations."[114]

One of the main reasons for undertaking a visit to the cemetery was the hope of affecting the fate of beloved ones in the after-world. Some Qurʾānic verses deny such a possibility altogether: "And beware of a day when no soul for another shall give satisfaction, and no intercession be accepted from it" (2:48); or: "Warn them of the Day of the Imminent . . . and the evildoers have not one loyal friend, no intercessor to be heeded" (40:18), and: "Neither your blood-kind nor your children shall profit you upon the day of resurrection" (60:3). Other verses allow for the intervention of angels on behalf of the dead—"Those who bear the throne, and those round about it, proclaim the praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe" (40:7); or for the intervention of the Prophet Abraham, or some other intercessor "whom He accepts" (21:28).[115] From early on, Muslims attributed *shafāʿa* (intercession) for the living and the dead to Muḥammad. Al-Nawawī quotes ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, who is said to have heard the Prophet say: "When you hear the muezzin repeat what he says, then call down blessing on me . . . then ask God to bless me with mediation, for that is an office in Paradise reserved for one only of the servants of God, and I hope to be he. And whoever asks for me the power of mediation shall have the right to my intercession." He also comments that all, even perfect believers, need the Prophet's intercession, as "the traditions . . . firmly establish the fact of intercession made for some groups that they may enter Paradise without judgment, and for another group that their position in Paradise may be a higher one."[116] Various other mediators, such as the personification of good deeds, martyrs, dead infants and living mortals, were attributed with the same power.[117] An inscription on the tombstone of a Muslim who died as early as 31/652 implores God to forgive the deceased and his

[114] Ibn al-Athīr, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, *al-Mathal*, 2:154.
[115] See Bowker, "Intercession," 69–77.
[116] Nawawī, *Adhkār*, 19, 169; trans. in Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, 37, 41.
[117] Wensinck "Shafāʿa," 177–179; Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, 38–47; Kinberg, "Interaction," 304; Giladi, "The child," 378.

relatives, asking anyone reading these words to add a supplication of his own and say amen.[118]

Most *ʿulamāʾ* considered the performance of the formal daily prayers at the cemetery reprehensible. Ibn Qudāma quotes the Prophet saying: "The whole world is a place of prostration, with the exception of the bathhouse and the cemetery." Ibn Qudāma also states that the connection between the cult of the dead and the worship of idols is the reason for the prohibition of turning the cemetery into a place of prayer.[119] Yet, funerary mosques were common, and those who could afford it often arranged to be buried in such a complex, no doubt sensing the advantage of being interred in a place of constant prayer, all the more so, one that they themselves had founded. The tombs of the Ayyūbid rulers Saladin, al-Malik al-ʿĀdil and al-Malik al-Kāmil are located in proximity to the great mosque, a setting imbued with more than one symbolic property, of course. The window, cut open in the wall separating the *turba* (mausoleum) of al-Malik al-Kāmil from the great mosque, clearly reveals that in the minds of whoever planned the edifice, the prayers performed in the mosque were conducive to the proper rest of the sultan. In a similar vein, founders of *madrasa*s wished to lie to rest in the institutions of study they had patronized, or brought their relatives to burial within them. Nūr al-Dīn's funerary *madrasa* is an early example of such an arrangement.[120] The mausoleum Ibn Shaddād intended for himself was located in between the two institutions of learning he had endowed during his lifetime: a *madrasa* (founded in 601/1204–5) and a *dār al-ḥadīth*. The whole complex had connecting doors and seven inner grille windows on a single axis.[121] Not quite satisfied with the *baraka*

[118] "*Istaghfir lahu ayḍan idhā qaraʾta hādhā al-kitāb wa-qul: āmin*" (el-Hawary, "Most Ancient," 322). For other examples from the first decades of Islam, see Donner, *Narratives*, 85–86, 53–55.

[119] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 2:468–475.

[120] For funerary mosques and *madrasa*s in Ayyūbid Damascus see Humphreys, "Women," 38–49. In contrast, the Jewish Moses Maimonides enumerates the cemetery and "the proximity of the dead" (alongside the bathhouse and the privy), as places forbidden for prayer, the study of the Torah and the use of sacred cultic objects, such as prayer shawls. He writes: "In the presence of the dead, nothing but things pertaining to the dead should be the topic of conversation. It is forbidden to engage in words of Torah in his presence, or in the cemetery" (Maimonides, *The Code*, 2:9 (Reciting *Shemaʿ* 3/2), 3:199 (Mourning 13/9)).

[121] Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 3.

of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, Bahāʾ al-Dīn stipulated that fourteen *qurrāʾ* recite the Qurʾān in his mausoleum, each one half a *subʿ* (one seventh of the book) after the last evening prayer. He is said to have wished for even more: that a full *khatma* (a complete reading) be recited there every single night.[122]

While formal prayer by grave sites was controversial, a personal supplication addressed to God (*duʿāʾ*)—was wholly endorsed by *ʿulamāʾ*. It was probably the primary means employed by those attempting to benefit their dead relatives throughout the centuries.[123] Also, Muslim scholars were not opposed to Qurʾān recitation in cemeteries, though opinions regarding the possibility of 'transferring' the credit for the recitation from the performer to the dead man he wishes to benefit (*wuṣūl thawāb qirāʾat al-Qurʾān ilā al-amwāt*) vary. In a question posed to Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī he is asked to explain why *duʿāʾ* does reach (i.e. benefits) the dead, while the benefit of the Qurʾān, which stands higher in rank, is disputed.[124] Al-Sulamī argues that the recompense for Qurʾān recitation does not reach the dead; but after his own death he appears to one of his pupils in a dream and confesses to have been mistaken on this matter after all.[125] Ibn Qudāma refrains from stating his opinion; he merely says that there is nothing reprehensible in reciting Qurʾān with such intention.[126]

Shaykh Saʿd of the village of Qīra (south of Nāblus) takes al-Sulamī's theological stand, albeit in a postmortem dream rather than in a *fatwā*. The deceased shaykh appears in a dream of his nephew, who asks him whether the Qurʾān can "reach the dead," and, more generally, whether the dead can be helped by good deeds performed by the living on their behalf. Shaykh Saʿd answers unequivocally: "Only his own deeds can help him."[127] I find it somewhat surprising that a rural shaykh should insist on such an unpopular notion, but of course, the author of the treatise who quotes the conversation, Ḍiyāʾ

[122] Ṭabbākh, *Iʿlām*, 4:364
[123] Gardet, "Duʿāʾ," 617–618; Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 73–74, 173–74, 188–191; al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 209.
[124] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Fatāwā*, 1:149.
[125] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 429, 430, n. 2; Diem, *The Living*, 2:150.
[126] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:518. For a similar discussion, based on several other sources, see Pahlitzsch, "Memoria," 84–87.
[127] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 92b; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 23).

al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (an urban Ḥanbalī scholar), may have been voicing his own convictions here. Other reputable representatives of the major schools of law in Damascus—the Shāfiʿī al-Nawawī, the Ḥanafī Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, and the Ḥanbalī Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī—agree that the living may grace the dead with the recompense for *duʿāʾ* and *istighfār* (begging for mercy), and for almsgiving (*ṣadaqa*).[128]

Commoners clearly had no doubts about the efficacy of recitation of Qurʾān on behalf of the dead: if the learned Ibn Shaddād had established pious endowments to cover the costs of such daily recitation by his grave, so did less educated men and women.[129] Ibn Jubayr tells of a wealthy and pious man by the name of al-Sumaysaṭī, who converted a house he owned in Damascus into a *khānqāh*, and adds: "He enjoined that he should be buried in it, and that the whole of the Qurʾān should be read over his tomb every Friday. He stipulated that a *riṭl* (5 lb.) of bread be given to all the poor and strangers who participate in the recitation and say a prayer on his behalf."[130] A *waqf* was assigned for the salaries of specific reciters who recited daily at the mausoleum of al-Malik al-ʿĀdil.[131] His daughter, Ḍayfa Khātūn, endowed a funerary *madrasa* with a large number of Qurʾān reciters in Aleppo. Tabbaa suggests, that the fact that women were prevented by the *sharīʿa* from passing their estate to brothers or sisters may have impelled some of them to use their assets for providing their siblings with a proper burial place in a funerary *madrasa* or *khānqāh*, thereby also enhancing the prestige of their natal families.[132]

One last variation on the theme of intercession for the dead, before we move on to its counterpart—intercession for the living—is that of the postmortem intervention of holy men on behalf of other, less righteous dead. This activity, normally hidden from the eyes of human beings on earth, was sometimes brought to their attention through dreams. A woman from the Ḥanbalī community of Mt. Qāsyūn, for

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[128] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:519–522; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Intiṣār*, 26; al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 430 n. 2; al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 52.

[129] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 93; al-Shahrazūrī, *Fatāwā*, 1:375. The daughters of al-Malik al-Kāmil appointed Qurʾān-reciters to his mausoleum (Humphreys, "Women," 41).

[130] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 289–290; trans. in Broadhurst, *Travels*, 302–304. On the construction of the *khānqāh* in 450/1058, see Sourdel et Sourdel-Thomine, "Dossiers," 137–138.

[131] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 132.

[132] Tabbaa, *Constructions*, 48.

example, encountered a female relative of hers, "a woman who used to skip prayers," in two of her dreams. In the first dream, the deceased relative reported that she is suffering hell-fire. But some time later, in an encounter that took place after the death of the saintly head of the community Shaykh Abū ʿUmar ibn Qudāma, she joyously announced that her tribulations were over thanks to his intervention.[133]

[133] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Sīrat Abī ʿUmar*, fol. 41a.

CHAPTER SIX

SHRINES (*MASHHAD*S AND *MAQĀMĀT*)

It is generally assumed, in various cultures, that death has a cleansing affect, and that consequently, the dead enjoy some moral advantage over the living and can take advantage of their closeness to God in order to intercede for the living. For all their debt to the dead of past generations, the living also feel entitled to some recompense for having taken care of them and of their graves.[1] The notion that the intercessory powers of those persons were most accessible at their graves made cemeteries and mausolea into central arenas of religious life. The intercession (*shafāʿa*) of men and women, who already during their lifetime were considered to be righteous and devoted to God, was considered even more efficacious.[2] Shrines—*mashhad*s (memorial structures, with or without a tomb)[3] and *maqām*s (monuments that commemorate an event in the life of a prophet or saint, or are constructed around a relic associated with him)[4]—were established in their honor. *Ziyāra*s (visitations, pilgrimages), both to the tombs of relatives and loved ones, and to the shrines in honor of saints,[5] as well as their construction and upkeep, became prevalent expressions of piety.[6] The various aspects of these phenomena are the subject matter of this chapter. While the previous chapters demonstrate how forces from 'above' and from 'below'

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[1] Greenblatt, "Shapes of Memory," 58–59.

[2] The perpetuation of *baraka* after death was not universally assumed. For anecdotes that imply the contrary, see Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales."

[3] It is worthwhile to reproduce here Max van Brechem's analysis of the term, in D.S. Rice's English paraphrase: "In its widest sense it signifies any Muslim tomb, a place where a Muslim, having pronounced the profession of faith (*shahāda*) before dying, lies buried. In its narrowest sense it means a martyry, the burial place of a martyr of the faith (*shahīd*)...there exists a third meaning: a memorial and place of pilgrimage (*mazār*); not just any Muslim's tomb but that of a holy man coupled with an oratory—a shrine" (Rice, "A Muslim Shrine," 438).

[4] For terms designating types of shrines and architectural parts of shrines, see Meri, *The Cult*, 262–272.

[5] In the Jewish community, the intercession of the 'regular' dwellers of cemeteries was regarded efficient enough: in times of calamity public supplications were recited in their presence, as it were (Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 5:185).

[6] Meri, "The Etiquette," 280.

shaped religious tradition and custom in the arenas of the mosque, the assembly of popular exhortation and the cemetery—this chapter will demonstrate how those forces worked simultaneously, and in varied ways, in the arena of the holy shrine.

6.1. *Ziyāra*s *(visitations)*

The belief in the purifying effect of pilgrimage was a central factor in its popularity in medieval western Christendom. Hence, as J. Sumption has demonstrated, in periods of religious tension, obsession with sin and fear of final judgment, western pilgrimage thrived.[7] Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, in a study of Christian pilgrimage in late antiquity, finds another common denominator of pilgrimages: the quest to see and touch the sacred.[8] The available Arabic sources, as opposed to the sources employed by Sumption and Bitton-Ashkelony, do not allow a detailed reconstruction of the religious beliefs, personal circumstances and psychological motivation of people who undertook a *ziyāra*. It is possible, however, to glean a list of objectives that medieval Muslims hoped to achieve through their visits to tomb-sanctuaries. Some of the practical benefits sought after were a cure from disease,[9] the undertaking of a vow, or the fulfillment of one,[10] pleading for mercy before God, and praying for rain.[11] In Yāqūt's understanding, people visited venerated sites because they expected that the prayers (*duʿāʾ*) they offer there have a better chance of being answered.[12] There were pilgrims who sought to become more intimate with the person whose burial place they visited, while others hoped for a deep and meaningful religious

[7] Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, 94–136. Christian pilgrims would impose upon themselves special hardships (refrain from riding beasts of burden, wearing shoes, eating properly, etc.) in order to intensify the penitential aspect of the journey.

[8] Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering*, 6.

[9] Al-Harawī mentions a sanctuary (*maʿbad*) in the village of Burāq in northern Syria, that attracted the chronically ill and the sick (Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 14–15), and the thermal baths of Tiberias, attributed to Solomon the son of David (*ibid.*, 40–41).

[10] See, for example, Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:463 and 9:4062.

[11] Two explanations for the Jewish custom of going out to the cemetery in times of drought are given by Talmudic scholars: "One says: we are as the dead before Thee [i.e. it constitutes a symbolic act]; another: that the dead should intercede for mercy on our behalf" (*Bavli*, Taʿanit 16/1; Lichtenstein, "Ritual Uncleanness," 181, 197).

[12] He lists seven such "noble places (*al-mawāḍiʿ al-sharīfa*)" in Damascus, in addition to many graves of Companions (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 2:589–590). For a long list of graves of *ṣaḥāba* in Damascus, see al-Harawī's chapter on Damascus.

experience. In some cases, as I intend to show, a change in one's way of life, such as a process of penance, or the choice of a life of seclusion and asceticism, was motivated by a *ziyāra*. Or the other way round: such changes culminated in the performance of a *ziyāra*.[13] I did not find, however, any evidence of a lingering sense of the guilt, reminiscent of guilt described as burdening Sumption's Christian pilgrims, sending a Muslim pilgrim on his way to a sanctuary. No wonder—the Muslim perception of sin and salvation is much more optimistic than the Christian, if only because it does not charge man with the primordial sin. As a consequence, perhaps, Islam has no developed doctrine of atonement, and—needless to say—pilgrimage never became part of a penitential system in a manner known from medieval Christianity.[14] Moreover, a *ziyāra* could be a happy and relaxing experience: an occasion for an outing with family members and friends, feasting and eating sweets. Especially as, in most cases, a *ziyāra* was a visit to local or regional sites, devoid of long-distance travel and its hardships, an aspect so prominent in western pilgrimages.[15]

Victor Turner suggests that all sites of pilgrimage are held to be places in which miracles have occurred and continue to occur. Even pilgrims who do not expect to witness an actual miracle with their own eyes, trust that their religious belief will be invigorated and their chances to attain salvation enhanced, if they only expose themselves to the beneficent presence of a saint.[16] The Muslim sources seem to confirm his observation. For example: ʿAbd al-Mawlā b. Muḥammad, a visitor to the grave of Abū ʿUmar, tells of a wondrous event he witnessed there. He was all alone, reciting *sūrat al-baqara*, when he heard a voice rising from the grave to correct his mistaken reading of verse 68.[17] The wandering ascetic al-Harawī saw the Prophet in his

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[13] For pilgrimage as a vehicle for self transformation, and the search for a new religious identity, see Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering*, 10 (citing A. Dupront).

[14] Lazarus-Yafeh, "Concept of Redemption," 48. On the Islamic concepts of sin, sinfulness and repentance, see Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, 173–219.

[15] The relative rarity of pilgrims from distant lands at local shrines gave additional weight to their visits. Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī stresses the merits of his deceased uncle, shaykh Abū ʿUmar, by saying that he had met a man from India and an *ʿAjamī* (foreigner) at his grave (Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Sīrat Abī ʿUmar*, lines 69–80; see also Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 83).

[16] Turner, *Image*, 6.

[17] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 75. See similar stories in Diem, *The Living*, 2:143–144. For the belief that the dead recite the Qurʾān in their graves, see *ibid*., 2:151–152.

dream during a night he spent in Mashhad Ibrāhīm in Ascalon.[18] Other reports of similar wonders—of light or fire emanating from graves,[19] the apparition of al-Khaḍir (the Prophet Elijah in Jewish and Christian tradition),[20] the sudden appearance of a cloud to shade a funeral on a blazing hot summer day, or the fall of rain only and exclusively on the newly dug grave[21]—teach us that people sensed that there was a concentration of *baraka* in cemeteries. It was there that one was most susceptible to mystical experiences, and therefore Ṣūfīs would attempt to induce an apparition of their shaykh by pilgrimage to his grave, hours of prayer for his soul, and sleeping at his sanctuary.[22]

The historian Abū Shāma was moved to tears at the grave of the Ḥanbalī shaykh Abū ʿUmar. He describes his experience saying: "I encountered there, with God's succor, great bliss (*riqqa ʿaẓīma*) and I wept with all my heart." Ibn al-ʿAdīm, an eminent scholar and a prominent member of the Aleppan elite, combined the quest for the spiritual and the intellectual in his visit to the grave of the ascetic Abū Marwān al-Maghribī. In the course of his work on the entry devoted to Abū Marwān in his big biographical dictionary, *Bughyat al-Ṭalab fi Taʾrīkh Ḥalab*, Ibn al-ʿAdīm and his informant, the *qāḍī* Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh, visited the sanctuary in which Abū Marwān was buried. The historian concludes his report about this trip as follows: "I visited the righteous men there, may God have mercy upon them all, and we benefited [or: may we all benefit] from their blessing, amen."[23] Ibn al-ʿAdīm records several of his *ziyāra*s: a visit to the grave of the poet Qadīb al-Bān (d. 570/1175) and the righteous *faqīh* Ibn al-Ḥamawayh (d. 617/1220);[24] visits to the grave of the Ḥanafī jurist of the fifth/eleventh century Mushriq b. ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿĀbid, accompanied by his father; visits to the grave of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Zāhid (548/1153–4), and a *ziyāra* to Mashhad Rūḥīn with a party that included some of his relatives and a Ḥanafī *mudarris* from Damascus. This last pilgrimage

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[18] Meri, *Lonely Traveler*, 80–83. For sleeping in a sanctuary in other cultures, see Geary, *The Living*, 170.

[19] For many examples from Muslim and Jewish literature, along with a perceptive discussion of light and holiness, see Meri, *The Cult*, 21–24.

[20] See Meri, "Reappropriating Sacred Space."

[21] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:60; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 2:530; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 73; Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Sīrat Abī ʿUmar*, lines 69–80; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:464; al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 169.

[22] Sirriyeh, "Dreams," 118.

[23] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7:3440.

[24] Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 119.

took place while Ibn al-ʿAdīm's family was spending the summer ("the days of the watermelon") at the village of Samāʿ al-Fawqā, "as Aleppans do every year."[25] Another scholar who undertook *ziyāra*s was Abū al-Thanāʾ Maḥmūd b. al-Ṣābūnī. He stopped in Damascus on his way to Cairo, to visit the grave of the great jurist and founder of his school of law, al-Shāfiʿī, and refused to be deterred from reaching his destination by Nūr al-Dīn's proposal that he stay in Syria and enjoy his patronage.[26]

Ayyūbid scholars address the issue of proper practice in cemeteries and mausolea in their legal and theological writings, and answer questions about charitable donations to shrines, their upkeep and adornment. They sometimes criticize their contemporaries for digressions from the prescriptions of the religious law and moral code, but they do not try to keep men away from shrines altogether. The dominant attitude, as articulated clearly both in the fourth/eleventh century and in the seventh/thirteenth century, was that the visitation of tombs was permissible, and even beneficial.[27] Notwithstanding reservations of some early scholars regarding the permissibility of women's visits to cemeteries, scholars such as al-Ghazzālī, al-Nawawī and Ibn Qudāma did not differentiate between the sexes in this matter, as long as women behaved properly. Al-Shayzarī's attitude is stricter: he expects the *muḥtasib* to stop women from visiting graves.[28] Some later authors, such as Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737/1336), were unequivocally opposed to women's going out to cemeteries (or elsewhere), especially on holidays.[29]

Syria could not boast of an equivalent to the al-Qarāfa cemetery in Cairo—where sultans, high-ranking *ʿulamāʾ* and Muslims of all other echelons of society participated in organized daily *ziyāras* to the mausolea of numerous saints.[30] But the cemetery of Bāb al-Ṣaghīr

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[25] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:462–466, 9:4062. See also *ibid*., 8:3833, 10:4419, 4621. About Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Zāhid, see *ibid*., 10:4416, and Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 20:380–84. It would be good to know more about recreation in medieval Syria.

[26] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 2:128. For other examples of scholars visiting tombs of scholars see Diem, *The Living*, 2:105–106.

[27] See al-Ghazzālī's chapter on the visitation of graves and prayer on behalf of the dead—"*bayān ziyārāt al-qubūr wa-l-duʿāʾ li-l-mayyit wa-mā yataʿallaqu bihi*" (*Iḥyāʾ*, 6:126–130); and similar chapters. Ibn Qudāma's "*wa lā baʾsa an yazūra al-rajul al-maqābir*" (*al-Mughnī*, 3:517–23, 2:570) and al-Nawawīs "*bāb istiḥbāb ziyārāt al-qubūr li-l-rijāl, wa-mā yaqūluhu al-zāʾir*" (*al-Aḥkām*, 2:106–8).

[28] Diem, *The Living*, 2:37; Buckley, *The Book*, 127.

[29] Berkey, *The Formation*, 253.

[30] Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 63–64; *idem*, "Saints."

in Damascus, known for its ancient graves, was also a major attraction for pilgrims. Ibn Jubayr notes the prevailing conviction that a visit to the graves of the martyrs and companions of the Prophet in Bāb al-Ṣaghīr, amongst them that of Bilāl b. Rabāḥ, the first muezzin (d. 20/641), bestows *baraka*, and that the prayers pious men perform there are bound to be answered.[31] The common assumption, that burial next to the graves of the righteous was beneficent, made that cemetery the favored burial-ground for *ʿulamāʾ*, and further enhanced its prestige.[32] Jerusalem and Hebron were prominent concentrations of ancient holy sites and important graves. Outside of those 'primary' sacred strongholds, in and around towns and villages all over Syria, there were tombs considered to be of prophets belonging to the Biblical-Qurʾānic tradition (or sanctuaries commemorating them),[33] tombs of companions or relatives of the Prophet—mainly descendents of ʿAlī and Fāṭima (*ahl al-bayt*),[34] and tombs of later Muslim exemplars and martyrs, amongst them the especially venerated *abdāl*.[35] Their numbers were constantly growing. In the period we are dealing with, it seems that new sacred sites were being added on to the traditional inventory in unprecedented pace, as a consequence of both the appropriation and transformation of older sacred sites, as well as the establishment of new ones.

6.2. *Transformation of Sites*

The sanctity of Bilād al-Shām was established under the Umayyads.[36] From early on, the number of graves of prophets in a city or a locality

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[31] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 279. On the cemetery of Bāb al-Ṣaghīr, see Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:419; Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 30–31; Sourdel-Thomine, "anciens lieux," 78–80; Mo'az and Ory, *Inscription*, esp. 155–89. See also, Mouton, *Damas*, 281–285.

[32] See discussion of this notion in Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 47–50; and Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:442.

[33] See Sourdel-Thomine, "anciens lieux," 70–82; Eddé, *Alep*, 429–45. For a list of Qurʾānic prophets said to have contributed to the holiness of al-Shām, see Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 151–152.

[34] See al-Jalālī, *Mazārāt*, chapters on al-Shām.

[35] Righteous men (forty in every generation) ranking high in the hierarchy of the *awliyāʾ* (friends of God). On the *abdāl*'s special connection to Syria, particularly to Mt. Lebanon, as established in *ḥadīth*, see Goitein, "Sanctity of Jerusalem"; Elad, "The Caliph," 38–49.

[36] Scholars disagree over the relative importance of religious and political factors in this process (see bibliography and discussion in Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 147–163). Elad himself notes that "religion and politics are inseparable in early Islam" (*ibid.*, 149), a comment that may well apply to the crusading period as well.

was explicitly mentioned in traditions relating to the merits of the place, and quoted in geographical and other literature.[37] Al-Muqaddasī's geographical treatise, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Maʿrifat al-Aqālīm* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions), which appeared in 375/986, for example, begins as follows: "Syria is the abode of the Prophets, the habitation of the righteous, the home of the successors of the Prophet... It contains the first *qibla*, the scene of the day of the resurrection, and of the night journey of the Prophet."[38] Al-Muqaddasī mentions specific sites in connection with some twenty prophets and *ṣaḥāba*, and two relics of the Prophet.[39] The first anthologies of *faḍāʾil al-shām* (the merits of Syria), a territory stretching from the Euphrates to the southern shore of the Mediterranean ("*min al-Furāt ilā al-ʿArīsh*"),[40] abound with sayings in praise of the land as an idealized entity, and in praise of its people. They say conspicuously little about specific sites, aside for Jerusalem, Hebron (al-Khalīl), Bethlehem and Damascus. This holds true for the works of al-Wāsiṭī, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Rabaʿī[41] and Ibn al-Murajjā—(all written in the first half of the eleventh century), which also mention other locales, but without specific detail. The authors of the Ayyūbid period, a century or two later, supply considerably more information about the sanctity of specific Syrian sites; albeit information which they often question, or even reject as inauthentic.

Kitāb al-Ishārāt fī Maʿrifat al-Ziyārāt by Abū Bakr al-Harawī (d. 611/1215), and the geographical lexicon *Muʿjam al-Buldān* by Yāqūt (d. 626/1228), demonstrate this phenomenon. A typical example is al-Harawī's treatment of a tradition (undated, of course) that 'sets' the Arab prophet Ṣāliḥ within the precincts of a shrine near Qinnasrīn (in northern Syria). He writes: "The truth is that Ṣāliḥ was in the land of Yemen, and that his tomb is in Shabwa."[42] Ibn al-ʿAdīm suggests that the mistaken tradition originates from the fact that the name of the

[37] Kister, "Sanctity," 42; Von Grunebaum, "Sacred Character."

[38] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 151, 184; trans. in Collins, *Best Divisions*, 128, 155.

[39] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 151, 156, 160, 167, 170, 172–73, 178; trans. in Collins, *Best Divisions*, 128, 133, 137, 141, 143, 144, 149.

[40] Al-Rabaʿī, *Faḍāʾil*, 11.

[41] Compare the chapter about the virtues of al-Shām and its people (where no specific site is mentioned) with the chapter in praise of Damascus, which associates saintly figures—al-Khaḍir, Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyāʾ, Hūd, Mūsā, Maryam, ʿĪsā, Ibrāhīm, etc.—with specific loci in and about the city (al-Rabaʿī, *Faḍāʾil*, 30–35, 50, 51, 56, 69). About this work, see Cobb, "Virtual Sacrality."

[42] Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 16–17, 44–45.

builder of the shrine was Ṣāliḥ—Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī ibn al-ʿAbbās, governor of Syria.[43] Al-Harawī, who lists almost two hundred additional sites, expresses his doubts regarding sanctuaries in honor of *ṣaḥāba* and prophets (such as Mūsā-Moses, Joshua b. Nūn, ʿĪsā-Jesus and Maryam-Mary). In some cases he suggests corrections to the traditions he cites, repeatedly claiming that the companions of the Prophet were actually buried in the Ḥijāz, or that the early prophets were active in Palestine rather than in northern Syria.[44] He repeatedly ends his entries with the routine formula '*wa-Allāhu aʿlam*'—God knows best, perhaps meaning to say that most of his informants do not. Yāqūt, who relates a legion of traditions establishing the exact location of biblical-Qurʾānic events in Damascus and its vicinity,[45] often contests traditions regarding the burial place of companions and relatives of the Prophet in more peripheral settlements, in a way similar to that of al-Harāwī's. For example: in the entry about Baʿlabakk he argues that while "it is said" that Ḥafṣa bint ʿUmar the wife of the Prophet is buried there, in truth she is buried in Medina, and the grave in Baʿlabakk must be that of another Ḥafṣa. As for a stone that, according to Damascenes, served Abraham to smash the idols that his father had produced, Yāqūt argues that Āzar (Abraham's father, according to the Qurʾān) in fact never left Ḥarrān.[46]

At least some of the traditions that al-Harawī and Yāqūt reproduce and dismiss as 'invented' seem to have been rather recent (at that time) local attempts at attaining a stake in sacred topography, especially in peripheral areas that heretofore did not enjoy the blessings of the proximity of sanctuaries, and the presence of pious visitors. Or, more specifically, such traditions may be means by which a grave or shrine of an obscure local saint was 'upgraded' and elevated in rank, by connecting it with an 'important' historical or mythical figure, with the original identification 'obliterated' and lost. Such a development may be a result of local initiatives, or, perhaps more likely, the result of an erroneous identification of a traveler.[47] In any case, the ordinary

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[43] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:467; Korn, *Ayyūbidische Architektur*, 265.

[44] Another tradition, apparently accepted by Jews and Muslims at the beginning of the thirteenth century, located the tomb of Joshua near Tiberias (Reiner, "From Joshua," 232 n. 21).

[45] Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 2:587–597.

[46] Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 1:454, 522. On Āzar, see Firestone, "Āzar."

[47] I owe these ideas to Nurit Lissovski. See her "Written in the Landscape," on the turbulent history of the identification and status of one holy site in the Galilee.

devout Muslim probably did not share the uneasiness of scholars regarding the authenticity of traditions. Al-Harawī's doubts regarding the tomb of Joshua b. Nūn, for example, were neither shared by al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī, who renovated the sanctuary at Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān (604/1207–8), nor by the visitors that frequented the place.[48] Sometimes even a vague oral tradition alluding to "one of the prophets," or to the *baraka* of a certain sanctuary, was sufficient basis for the growth of a cult.[49] As we shall see, people readily accepted traditions that associated specific 'secondary' locations in Syria with the deeds of specific venerated Islamic figures, or with their burial places. By using the term 'secondary' locations I mean to exclude Jerusalem and Damascus, Hebron and Bethlehem, which possess an Islamic reputation for holiness based upon their association with the greatest figures and most important events of Islam's sacred history, and securely established in much earlier narratives.[50]

On the whole, the admittedly slim evidence about the evolution of traditions converges nicely with the much richer evidence about the construction of shrines—as drawn from twelfth-thirteenth century historical writings—and does suggest parallel textual and architectural developments.[51] A question left open is whether Muslims drawn to former or contemporaneous cultic sites of Christians and Jews were mainly new converts, who wished to preserve their older traditions, or 'old' Muslims, drawn to the colorful or promising cults of their neighbors. In his well known article on the veneration of saints in Islam, Goldziher points to its pagan origins (or antecedents), and explains how this ancient and universal tradition was adapted to Islamic notions and traditions. He finds it to have served the need of individuals and of communities of various ethnic origins and geographical localities to preserve their own particular identity within the universalistic *umma*.[52] He also formulates the "principal of continuity of sacred space," saying that: "Localized practices are the strongest support for old traditions. There is the temple of a god to which people have made pilgrimages

[48] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:468.
[49] See, for example, Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:465, on the sanctity of Mashhad al-Rajam.
[50] Kister, "Sanctity."
[51] As established in two of Shmuel Tamari's works: "Nabī Yūnus," and "Arabization."
[52] Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2:255–341. For a short survey of modern scholarship on the veneration of holy sites in Islam, see Sourdel-Thomine, "Traditions," 320–321.

for many hundreds of years in order to worship and ask for help in need. Popular tradition does not forget the help which they sought and believed they obtained at these places. The temple becomes the grave of a saint, the god a *walī*. Syria and Palestine have many notable examples of this process."[53]

Syria was indeed saturated with Jewish and Christian memories and holy sites,[54] many of which were adopted by the Muslims. Naturally, there was continuity with earlier traditions, and a 'preservation' of some aspects of their heritage in the evolving Islamic medieval cult. But—keeping in mind Brown's wonderful simile according to which "to explain the Christian cult of the martyrs as the continuation of the pagan cult of heroes helps as little as to reconstruct the form and function of the late-antique Christian basilica from the few columns and capitals taken from classical buildings that are occasionally incorporated in its arcades"[55]—change is at least as important to track and explain. A complete 'conversion' of a site, such that entails the narration of a coherent Islamic sacred history of the place, the exclusion of members of other faiths and the establishment of a distinctly Islamic ritual, may have lasted centuries, if it ever took place. In most cases, the Islamic reinterpretation (or: narrative) of the source of the sanctity of a place, and the adoption of visitation to the place were built upon an existing cult, that were superseded and replaced only very gradually, if at all.[56] Even the erection of a distinctly Islamic architectural feature, such as a minaret or *miḥrāb* did not necessarily imply the immediate elimination of non-Muslims from a site that they held to be holy.

Some medieval historians openly admit that the aura of sanctity of quite a few pilgrimage sites in Syria originated in pre-Islamic times. A big marble seat from Ḥammām Mughān in Northern Syria, revered as the chair of Jesus, is one example. The geographer Ibn Shaddād explains that in antiquity it was part of a pagan fire-sanctuary (*maʿbad*

[53] Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2:303.

[54] About the Christian creation of holy places see Markus, "How on Earth," esp. p. 265.

[55] Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 6.

[56] 'Reinterpretation' is the term used by Goldziher; see his *Muslim Studies*, 2:300–305. For examples of the perpetuation of Christian cults alongside Muslim cults see Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 134–136; Meri, *The Cult*, 207, 212. For the Islamization of the landscape, see Tamari, "Arabization," 761–781; Luz, "Aspects of Islamization"; Frenkel, "Baybars," 153–170. For the appropriation of saints as atrigger for conversion, see Elliott, "Speaking," 316.

li-ʿubbād al-nār). Later, it was sanctified by the Jews, and then by Christians (who claimed that Jesus, or, according to another version, the apostles, had visited the place, as well as the later monk Barṣaumā). Finally, the Muslims appropriated the sanctuary.[57] Of the history of Mashhad al-Khaḍir, Ibn Shaddād tells us that it was an ancient sanctuary, which served as a meeting place for pious Aleppans in pre-Islamic times.[58] The chronicler Abū al-Fidāʿ (the last Ayyūbid prince) relates the line of succession of worshippers at the site of the great mosque of Damascus, from the time of the Sabians to the ascent of Islam.[59] A much shorter genealogy is connected to Mt. Samʿān in northern Syria: Ibn Shaddād cites anonymous historians (*ahl al-ta'rīkh*) who said that while the mountain was in the hands of "the Christians and Franks," a large Christian crowd would go up there every spring. When the Muslims regained control of the shrine on its summit (in 529/1135), they began to venerate the place "twice as much as the Christians," (while the Christians venerated it "as if it were Jerusalem," the Muslims celebrated there "like in Mecca") and turned it into a popular pilgrimage site.[60]

An enigmatic case of lingering pre-Islamic sanctity may be spotted in a quotation of Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Mazanī of Damascus. Al-Mazanī says that his father warned him not to enter the courtyard of Masjid al-Ṭabbākhīn when in need of anything, so that he would not be tempted (that is the gist of the story) to address a stone pillar that stood on the precincts of the mosque, as that pillar actually was a broken idol (*ṣanam maksūr*). Apparently, some Damascenes believed that it was a talisman for fulfilling needs in their own days as well.[61] In this case, the attitude of the learned Muslim towards 'the principal of continuity of sacred space' is clearly negative, and understandably so, as the cult is highly reminiscent of idol worship. But regarding the earlier examples, the rather 'neutral' reports of the Muslim authors may reflect approval and

[57] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:142. Barsauma is probably Bar-Ṣomā, an Archimendrite and saint of the Syrian church, who died in 458 C.E. Paul Cobb points to the similarity of rhetorical techniques employed by Jewish and Muslim authors to make places sacred (Cobb, "Virtual Sacrality," 53)—an intriguing phenomenon that certainly merits more research.
[58] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:143.
[59] See translation in Meri, *The Cult*, 39.
[60] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:163–66. See also Sourdel, "Rūḥīn," 93, n. 2, 100–101.
[61] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh*, 2:281.

even pride in what they must have regarded as a manifestation of the right, just, and predictable course of history: the abrogation (*naskh*) of all earlier religions by Islam. Moreover, they may be intentional constructs of that deterministic history.[62]

6.3. *Establishment of New Shrines*

During the Zangid and Ayyūbid period, tombs and memorials of prophets-of-old and of the companions of the Prophet Muḥammad were 'rediscovered' (more often than not through dreams), while tombs of contemporary shaykhs and martyrs, sanctified immediately after burial, were erected all over Syria. Rulers and commoners took part in the establishment of *mashhad*s and *maqāms*, and in financing their upkeep and frequent renovation. Ibn Jubayr lists the position of the keeper of sanctuaries (*sadānat mashhad min al-mashāhid al-mubāraka*) as one of the best and most profitable for pious foreigners residing in Damascus.[63] People regularly supplied shrines with oil and candles, often given as votive offerings. The abundance of those presents may be conferred from al-Nawawī's *fatwā*, which allows the exchange of surplus oil and candles for some other useful commodity. That, on the condition that the keeper who is to perform the exchange is the person legally in charge of its incomes (*al-nāẓir al-sharʿī*).[64] ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī permits the adornment of the mausolea of scholars and righteous men with candles, lamps and curtains, as it is permissible to adorn mosques, but adds a restriction: *mashhad*s are to be treated as houses rather than as mosques; their sanctity (*ḥurma*) by no means approaches that of mosques.[65] All this economical activity around shrines hints that piety was certainly not the only driving force behind the establishment of cultic sites. And, of course, there are plenty of other bonuses to having a shrine in one's backyard: the peace of mind assured by the protection of the saint, the sense of specific local identity which bolsters social cohesion, and local pride.[66]

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[62] For this idea I am indebted to Miriam Frenkel. See her "Sacred Sites."
[63] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 278.
[64] Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 94.
[65] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 325, 330.
[66] For this and other functions of holy graves in Bedouin society, see Bar-Tzvi *et al.*, *The Spell*, 16–17.

In his guide for the pilgrim to holy sites in Syria, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt fī Maʿrifat al-Ziyārāt*, al-Harawī relates the discovery of long-forgotten graves, and the renewed interest in them. He writes: "In the cemetery of Damascus are many of the shaykhs and ascetics, about whom we have written briefly, so as to avoid excessive length. It is said that among them are seventy of the *ṣaḥāba*...And they say that the cemetery of Damascus was plowed under and sown over for a hundred years, and therefore those graves are unknown."[67] Al-Harawī also expresses sorrow for the loss of information about "many tombs of the righteous (*ṣāliḥūn*) and the companions of the Prophet" in Wadī Jahannam outside of Jerusalem, as a result of "the Franks' taking control over the country."[68] Further indication of the rousing enthusiasm for "long-forgotten graves" may be found in Ibn al-ʿAdīm's *Bughya*, where he tells of the recent construction of a mausoleum on ancient tombs of righteous men, "of which all signs had been obliterated (*qubūr al-ṣāliḥīn qad intamasat*)."[69] Inscriptions show that the tombstone on the grave of the companion of the Prophet, Abū al-Dardā, and that on the grave of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār of the generation of the 'followers' (both died in 32/652–3), were renovated in the 620's/1220's by residents of Damascus. The tombstone on the grave of the companion Bilāl b. Rabāḥ, the first muezzin, was remade in 625/1228,[70] several months after the renewal of the "blessed place (*al-makān al-mubārak*)" of burial of the companion Ḍirār b. al-Azwar. The inscription which adorns the adjoining mosque praises Ḍirār for his contribution to the conquest of Syria.[71]

As noted earlier, Damascenes established shrines on the graves of their contemporaries as well, if they were deemed deserving. A painted edifice was constructed on the grave of the shaykhs Yūsuf al-Kamīnī (d. 657/1259)[72] and Ibrāhīm b. Saʿīd Jīʿāna (who were considered to have been *muwallaḥūn*—'fools for God'), and a tombstone with writing (*ḥijāra manqūsha bi-l-kitāba*) was set up. The admirers of these

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[67] Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 30–31 (with slight variations in translation).
[68] Meri, "Aspects of *Baraka*," 55.
[69] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7:3382.
[70] *RCEA*, 10:249–50, 259. Ibn ʿAsākir mentions the earlier tombstone and inscription in his quotation of Hibat Allāh b. Akfānī (d. 524/1129) describing the tombs of the *ṣaḥāba* at the cemetery of Bāb al-Ṣaghīr (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:419).
[71] *RCEA*, 10:251.
[72] See, p. 154, above.

shaykhs, who seem to have marshaled their own resources, resided there for some time. The term used by the chronicler is one which usually denotes dwelling in one of the sacred cities—*mujāwirūn ʿindahu*. They cooked and ate on the spot, read the Qurʾān, and busied themselves with *dhikr*.[73]

The graves of some of the martyrs of the counter-crusade became sites of pilgrimage and prayer; that of Shaykh Abū al-Ḥajjāj al-Fandalāwī, for example. Al-Fandalāwī, an elderly Mālikī scholar who insisted upon fighting the army of the Second Crusade despite his advanced age, was killed by the Franks on the outskirts of Damascus in 543/1148. His actively sought-after martyrdom was glorified by several chroniclers and biographers, and even a poet—Ibn al-Ḥakam al-Andalusī—eulogized him.[74] His tombstone also records his *shahāda*, while that of his friend who died with him, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jaljūlī (or al-Ḥalḥūlī), was engraved over the entrance to the mosque he founded.[75] The cemetery of Mamillā in Jerusalem, the resting-place of the remains of Muslims who were killed in the course of the bloody conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, and that of Badr al-Dīn al-Hakkārī, who achieved martyrdom while fighting the battle of al-Ṭūr (Mt. Tabor) in 615/1218, also drew pious visitors.[76] The *Kitāb al-Jihād* of Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 81/797), read out loud in public in Damascus during the Second Crusade (that is, at the time of al-Fandalāwī's death), explicitly calls upon Muslims to "go to the martyrs, visit them and greet them."[77]

Anecdotes, recounted by the historians and travelers Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn Jubayr, al-Harawī, Ibn al-ʿAdīm and Ibn Shaddād, show that the public willingly adopted new sites of both sorts (antique and recent), and was ready to contribute to their construction, refurbishment and upkeep. They tell of men and women of various social strata and ethnic backgrounds, who rediscovered abandoned graves of prophets and companions of the Prophet thanks to visionary dreams they had dreamt. In most of those stories, which are no doubt constructed according to literary topoi, the dreamer (particularly if he happened

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[73] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 12:217, 298. Ibn Kathīr, who despised men like al-Kamīnī, categorizes as *bidʿa* the work of the craftsman who constructed the edifice, but refrains from commenting upon the cult on al-Kamīnī's grave.

[74] Mouton, "al-Fandalāwī." On the quest for martyrdom in the context of the counter-crusade see Talmon-Heller, "Muslim Martyrdom."

[75] Al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, 2:350–351. See also Sivan, *L'Islam*, 74–75.

[76] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 38, 108.

[77] Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, 87; Bonner, "Some observations," 27.

to be a simple soldier, sinner, or shepherd) expresses the worry that he would meet with disbelief. In all those cases, his worry is in vain. The audience—be it friends, a wealthy emir, a crowd standing at the entrance to a local mosque, or "the people" (*al-nās*)—readily follow the dreamer to the site he envisioned. There, the truth of the matter becomes immediately evident through a sign, or a series of signs: the apparition of al-Khaḍir, the exposure of a spring, the odor of musk, the unearthing of ancient edifices or graves, "and other things that amazed the people and soldiers."[78] As William Christian observed, a successful cult site requires a "momentum of miraculousness," witnesses and gossipers to spread the rumor.[79] When those conditions were met, better yet, when the revelatory dream also provided detailed instructions for the construction of a mausoleum, people set to work to create a new site for pilgrims and penitents.

The story of Mashhad Ḥusayn, a sanctuary at the foot of Mt. Jawshān, west of Aleppo (formerly, the site of a Christian monastery), is a fascinating example. It was established, according to the Shīʿī historian Ibn Abī Ṭayyiʾ (d. c. 630/1232–3), as a result of a dream of a shepherd. Standing timidly before the great mosque of Aleppo in the year 573/1178, the man transmitted the message he received in his sleep, namely, that he should construct a *mashhad* in a certain place southwest of Aleppo. When a spring suddenly began to flow there, a group of the town's men became convinced of the veracity of the dream. A *mashhad* in honor of Ḥusayn, who allegedly once stopped to pray there,[80] was indeed constructed, thanks to the generous support of the Sunnī Zangid prince al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ. Aleppan dignitaries (including Sunnīs like the *qāḍī* Ibn Shaddād), craftsmen and shopkeepers donated money or labor. Some years later, Saladin and his son al-Malik al-Ẓāhir endowed property for the upkeep of the place, and, amongst other expenditures—for the distribution of sweets on Friday nights. With time, the mausoleum became filled with the gifts of pious visitors: carpets, mats, drapes, brass vessels, lamps and candles. During the reign of al-Malik al-ʿAzīz in Aleppo (613/1216–634/1236), the Shīʿī *qāḍī*

[78] The most detailed account of 'signs' I have come across appears in al-Bajanī's story (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7:3382; trans. in Meri, "Re-appropriation," 259–60, and *idem, The Cult*, 179–83).

[79] Christian, *Local Religion*, 102.

[80] Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 2:692.

Bahāʾ al-Dīn ibn al-Khashshāb (d. 648/1250), one of two prominent Aleppans then in charge of the administration of the *waqf* of the sanctuary, began the construction of a convent for ascetics who wished to live on the spot. The looting Mongol soldiers put an end to the project in 658/1260, in the midst of its construction.[81]

Another pilgrimage site in Northern Syria was, to a large extent, the creation of Sadīd al-Dīn al-Muẓaffar, a clerk in the administration of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir of Aleppo (582/1186–613/1216).[82] He was sent to Mt. Samʿān in 600/1203–4, in order to conduct a land-survey. Upon his arrival, he decided to spend the night in a deserted sanctuary, considered to house the graves of Quss b. Sāʿida,[83] and the apostles (*al-ḥawariyyūn*) Samʿūn al-Ṣafāʾ and Samʿān.[84] Villagers from nearby Rūḥīn warned him of robbers and wild animals, but Sadīd al-Dīn did not change his plans, and was cured from a lingering disease that night. He then vowed to dedicate his time and money to the rehabilitation of the sanctuary. He retired from his former life, renovated the *mashhad*, planted a fruit orchard, exposed a dried-up spring, and resided in the sanctuary till his last day.[85] His former employer, al-Malik al-Ẓāhir, paid him a visit and endowed the site with the revenues of an adjacent village. After Sadīd al-Dīn's death, al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrānshāh (d. 658/1260) provided for the salaries of other caretakers. Several other philanthropists (one of his emirs, a daughter of another emir, and the supervisor of the *waqf*) endowed a wall, a bathhouse and a *khān*, and local villagers dug a cistern.[86]

A weeklong festival (*mawsim*) by the name of *khamīs al-ruzz*—Thursday of the Rice (the equivalent of the Egyptian Thursday of the

[81] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:152–55. There are similar elements in Ibn Abī Ṭayyiʾ's account of the construction of Mashhad ʿAlī in Aleppo in 522/1128 (see Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7:3381–82; trans. and annotated in Meri, "Re-appropriation," 259–262). Many other shrines were erected in honor of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī in Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt: see Meri, *The Cult*, 191–195

[82] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:159–167; trans. in Sourdel, "Rūḥīn," 90–93, and in Meri, *The Cult*, 203–204.

[83] Considered to have been a *ḥanīf* (an early Arabian monotheist), or even one of the Companions (Pellat, "Ḳuss b. Sāʿida").

[84] Al-Harawī and Yāqūt argue against the identification of the graves of the apostles there. See the discussion in Sourdel, "Rūḥīn," 94, 98–99.

[85] Similarly, after the construction of the *mashhad* he had envisioned in his dream, al-Bajanī "repented and came to sit in this spot; [saying] perhaps God will forgive my sins" (see Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7:3381–82).

[86] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:466; Eddé, *Alep*, 433.

Lentils, according to the chronicler Ibn Shaddād)[87]—had been celebrated there in the spring since the mid seventh/thirteenth century. The festival drew people from Aleppo, Ḥamāh, Ḥarrān, Bālis and their surroundings, to become (to the best of my knowledge) the first Syrian *mawsim* recorded in our sources.[88] It is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to explain the connection between the sanctuary of Quss b. Sāʿida and the Thursday of the Rice, especially as the timing of the festival was not associated with his life, but with the seasons. Probably, like many other similar festivals, it was celebrated in the vicinity of graves, though only very loosely connected with them.[89]

The last case that I wish to discuss here is that of a sanctuary dedicated to the companion al-Anṣarī, a sanctuary that was controlled by women of non-Arab origins. In this case, the information about the location of the forgotten grave was revealed to a wife of a Turkish emir in her sleep. A grave was indeed found in the place designated, and a mausoleum was constructed on the outskirts of the neighborhood of the Yārūqiyya (the chronicler does not tell us by whom).[90] It did not become a successful enterprise until another woman, the freed slave Azanaylūfar, renovated it. After 622/1225, the year of the death of her former master (whose daughter, incidentally, endowed the construction of the *khān* at Mashhad Rūḥīn mentioned above), Azanaylūfar went to reside in the sanctuary, to take care of pilgrims and supply them with sweetmeats and rosewater. Her daughters and maidservants continued her life's work there, until the destruction of the site by the Mongols.[91] It would have been nice to know if this particular site drew mainly Turkish pilgrims, and of the nature of its ties with the nearby neighborhood of the Yārūqiyya, but the sources are indifferent to our curiosity.

Quite a few members of the ruling Zangid and Ayyūbid houses invested in pilgrimage sites by financing building and reconstruction

[87] Mentioned also by al-Maqrīzī, in his list of Fāṭimid festivals (al-Maqrīzī, *Mawāʿiẓ*, 1:495).

[88] An earlier source, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, however, reports of a festival in honor of Ṣiddīqa, the son of the prophet Ṣāliḥ, at his alleged tomb at Mt. Ṣiddīqa, between Tyre and Banyas, on Niṣf Shaʿbān. Al-Muqaddasī claims to have been there (and even preached there) together with a crowd of people from the cities of Tyre, Sidon, Banyas and Qadas, and a representative of the sultan (Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 188; trans. in Collins, *The Best Divisions*, 159).

[89] Von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festivals*, 81. See also Meri, *The Cult*, 123.

[90] Turkmen from Northern Syria and Eastern Anatolia (Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 30).

[91] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:156–57; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 1:465; Meri, *Lonely Traveler*, 12–15.

works, and by initiating the translation of relics. Nūr al-Dīn, for example, was involved in a variety of construction projects, including a mausoleum in honor of the companion Abū Sulaymān al-Dāranī in Dārayyā, the mausoleum of the Shīʿī *imām* Yaḥyā in Mosul,[92] and the renovation of the Seljuq Maqām Ibrāhīm south of Aleppo. Ibn Shaddād reports that this last site, to which also al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī later contributed, attracted pilgrims of all countries. Since many people wished to be buried in its vicinity, a large cemetery—Maqbarat al-Ṣāliḥīn—grew up around it.[93] Earlier in his career, in 541/1147, Nūr al-Dīn completed the renovation of Mashhad al-Muḥassin b. Ḥusayn on the outskirts of Aleppo. The Shīʿī historian Ibn Abī Ṭayyiʾ concedes that the grave of this obscure "last grandson of ʿAlī" was unknown even to the Shīʿīs of Aleppo, until discovered by Sayf al-Dawla b. Ḥamdān (the most important Shīʿī ruler in the history of Aleppo) in 351/926. Since then, it has been repeatedly renovated by Sunnī rulers and commoners.[94] The question as to whether those Sunnī rulers had primarily intended to assert Sunnī 'rights' to *ahl al-bayt*, or rather co-opt local Shīʿīs and promote peaceful co-existence in Aleppo, needs further study. In the meantime, it merits at least the following short digression.

Jean-Michel Mouton asserts that under the earlier Būrids the cult of relics of the Prophet in Damascus was promoted in a way that was conducive to rapprochement between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs. He also notes that Mashhad ʿAlī and Mashhad al-Raʾs, the most important shrines for Shīʿīs in Damascus, which supposedly contained the relics of the martyrs of the massacre at Karbalāʾ (61/680),[95] were located within the complex of the great mosque and in the cemetery of Bāb al-Ṣaghīr,[96]

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[92] Sauvaget, *Alep*, 124–125; Elisséeff, "Les monuments."

[93] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:143. On Abraham as the patron saint of Aleppo, see Eddé, *Alep*, 430; Tabbaa, *Constructions*, 106–108. Abraham was also venerated in Damascus at "the spot where he saw the star" (*sūra* 6:76), which was considered to be a favorable place for prayer and supplications (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:238). On the widespread cult of Abraham throughout Syria and Mesopotamia, see Meri, *The Cult*, 195–199.

[94] See Eddé, *Alep*, 448–452; *RCEA*, 9:125 (on the contribution of one Abū Ghanīm al-Bazzāz al-Ḥalabī). See translation of the passage quoted from Ibn Abī Ṭayyiʾ, in Meri, *The Cult*, 159.

[95] In Shīʿī collective memory, Damascus was the place of captivity and suffering of the women and children survivors of Karbalāʾ, and the burial place of some of the mutilated bodies of the martyrs (Jalālī, *Mazārāt*, 223–228).

[96] Mouton, "Reliques," 250; Pouzet, *Damas*, 245–246, Sourdel et Sourdel-Thomine, "Dossiers," 168–69. On the elusive character of the Shīʿī milieu of twelfth-thirteenth century Damascus, see Mouton, *Damas*, 341–345.

that is, in the very heart of Damascene sacred space. Al-Harawī's guide lists shrines of the Imāms of the Ithnā ʿAshariyya and members of *ahl al-bayt* along with tombs of those *ṣaḥāba* most resented by Shīʿīs, to suggest that he himself endorsed the 'ecumenical' attitude of his Baghdādī patron, Caliph al-Nāṣir.[97]

The idea that Sunnī rulers tried to promote peaceful co-existence with Shīʿīs is suggested by the medieval historian Ibn Abī Ṭayyiʾ. He quotes his father recalling that, at the beginning of his rule, Nūr al-Dīn honored the Aleppans (no doubt meaning the Shīʿīs of Aleppo) by allowing the Shīʿī call to prayer, and by paying a visit to Mashhad al-Diqqa, where the stillborn grandson of ʿAlī was allegedly buried.[98] It did not take long for Nūr al-Dīn to change his taste: some months later he banned the Shīʿī call for prayer from the minarets of Aleppo, and after ten more years, in 552/1157, having barely recuperated from a severe illness, he repressed a revolt initiated by Shīʿīs who had high hopes of a change of government in their city.[99]

The prominent Sunnī scholars Abū Shāma and al-Nawawī appear very resentful towards Shīʿī claims to sacred space—more specifically, to the space of the narrow passage of Bāb Jayrūn (one of the gates of Damascus), which they considered to contain the tomb of one of the women of *ahl al-bayt*. The two Sunnī authors dismiss the Shīʿī claim as baseless, and call for the destruction of the shrine the Shīʿīs had erected there at the expense of passers-by, who wished to walk through the gate.[100]

Shīʿīs may have been just as resentful towards Sunnīs. Jean Sauvaget ascribes the initiative of local Shīʿīs to construct a sanctuary in honor of Ḥusayn and the other Imāms in Aleppo to their resentment of the 'appropriation' of Muḥassin b. Ḥusayn by the Sunnīs. Work on the site began during the relatively short reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl (569/1174–577/1181) as a truly collaborative effort, financed and carried

[97] Sourdel-Thomine, "Traditions," 322–323.

[98] Khayat, "Šiʿite Rebellions," 178; Tabbaa, *Constructions*, 109 (including a translation of Ibn Shaddād's passage regarding Sayf al-Dawla's discovery of the place in 351/962). Caliph al-Nāṣir, whose 'ecumenical' outlook is well known, seems to have contributed to the edifice over the tomb of Ḥusayn in a similar vein, namely, in order to appease Shīʿīs (Meri, *The Cult*, 260).

[99] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubda*, 3:308–310. Nūr al-Dīn's contemporary, al-Shayzarī, also wished to minimize Shīʿī presence in the public sphere, calling on the *muḥtasib* to ban the recitation of Shīʿī poetry in the markets, and its teaching in *maktab*s (Buckley, *The Book*, 131, 120).

[100] See Meri, *The Cult*, 45–46.

out by members of the community, and was completed early in the thirteenth century.[101] The edifice carried the marks of both Sunnī and Shīʿī Islam: a list of all twelve Imāms with their laudatory titles, and a perfectly Sunnī invocation of God's blessing for all the first four righteous caliphs (*al-Rashīdūn*) and the companions of the Prophet. The Sunnī rulers who invested in this *mashhad*—Saladin, his son al-Malik al-Ẓāhir, and his grandson al-ʿAzīz had their own names inscribed on it, announcing their patronage and stressing their authority. According to Yasser Tabbaa's interpretation, from the ambivalent point of view of the Sunnīs, the extraordinary beauty of Mashhad Ḥusayn had to be 'curtailed' by further means, hence the choice to surround the Shīʿī shrine with large and elaborate Sunnī *madrasa*s.[102] The last phase in the development of the *mashhad* under the Ayyūbids was initiated by the Shīʿī *qāḍī* Ibn al-Khashshāb for the benefit of those who wished to retire from society and spend some time in the vicinity of the sacred place. The construction of the residential units (*buyūt*) he had planned there was halted by the Mongol conquest of 658/1260.[103]

S.H. Winter, dealing with the fourteenth century, plays down Sunnī-Shīʿī enmity. In his view, a few spectacular cases of persecution made it into the local chronicles, while the ordinary lives of quietist Shīʿīs did not, and the resulting picture is therefore somewhat distorted. Moreover, he claims that "Shiʿism, whether a personal expression of religious devotion to the Prophet's family, or as the creed of large communities in northern and western Syria that were remnants of the 'Shīʿī centuries' (tenth–eleventh centuries), was not considered as something alien, the historiography of the piety-minded *ʿulamāʾ* notwithstanding. Only in the sixteenth century did Sunnism and Shiʿism become incompatible."[104] I will conclude by saying that further research on Sunnī-Shīʿī relations in general, and on the grounds of holy shrines in particular, is definitely in order.

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[101] Sauvaget, *Alep*, 124; Tabbaa, *Constructions*, 111. For the inscriptions on the sanctuary, see *RCEA*, 9:200–202; Grabar, "The Earliest," 39. The names of the twelve Imāms were engraved also in the sanctuary of al-Jurn al-Aṣfar, constructed in Aleppo in the twelfth century (Eddé, *Alep*, 446).

[102] Tabbaa, *Constructions*, 121.

[103] Tabbaa, *Constructions*, 112–113.

[104] Winter, "Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad," 171, 181.

6.4. *Sites shared with non-Muslims*

Similarities between the cult of the dead among medieval Middle Eastern Jews and among Muslims are striking, especially if we take into account the significant difference between the attitudes towards the corpse in the two religions. As is well known, in Judaism the corpse is the primary source of ritual impurity, and many laws deal with this issue, while the notion of the pollution of the corpse is altogether absent from Islamic law.[105]

Jewish pilgrimage to sites in Palestine and neighboring countries actually increased and became institutionalized in this very period. The veneration of holy sites became an integral part of the religious life of Jews in Muslim countries, and an expression of both elite and popular piety.[106] It hardly drew criticism from the rabbis.[107] Even Maimonides, who aimed at limiting activities at cemeteries, and explicitly discouraged visiting graves,[108] prayed at the tombs of the Patriarchs in Hebron and kissed their graves, after his visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in the year 560/1165. He celebrated the days of his pilgrimage as if they were holy days (*yom tov*), with "prayer, rejoicing in the Lord, food and drink."[109] As Elliott Horowitz aptly noted, "minimalist and maximalist positions vis-à-vis communicating with the dead could coexist within the same person."[110] Many sites were venerated simultaneously by Jewish, Muslim, and sometimes also by Christian

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[105] Lazarus-Yafeh, "Some Differences, 179–181." *Ritual Uncleanness* Yoel Lichtenstein's doctoral dissertation is devoted to explaining this puzzle, by tracing the evolution of Jewish perceptions "from ritual uncleanness to the sanctification of the dead" (see Lichtenstein).

[106] Kraemer, "A Jewish Cult," 579; Reiner, *Pilgrims*, 12–13, 219, 228.

[107] Some earlier Karaite scholars were highly critical of grave visitation. Sahl b. Maṣliaḥ (tenth century) accuses the Rabbanites of committing idolatrous practices in cemeteries: spending the night, making requests and votive offerings to the dead, lighting candles, burning incense, tying knots on trees, and—"praying to the dead like Muslims." (Lichtenstein, *Ritual Uncleanness*," 4; Horowitz, "Speaking," 305–307; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 5:19; Meri, *The Cult*, 220–222 (includes a translation of Sahl's tract). Ironically, Muslims critical of saint worship claim that the custom originates in Jewish and Christian misconduct. See Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya on this matter, in Meri, *The Cult*, 254.

[108] Maimonides, *The Code* (book of mourning 4/4), 174. "For the righteous no monument need be reared; their deeds are their (abiding) memorial; one need not, therefore, visit their graves too frequently."

[109] Maimonides, *Responsa*, 225.

[110] Horowitz, "Speaking," 313.

pilgrims. Ibn Shaddād mentions the grave of an anonymous prophet in Northern Syria, which members of all three religions consider to be a good place for taking vows.[111] Rabbi Jacob b. Nathaniel, a traveler of the sixth/twelfth century, tells of a cave in Tiberias, known as the burial place of Rabbi Kahana of the third century C.E., where "the people of all nations kindle lights, and the sick and the barren come and are healed."[112] Also in Tiberias, Menaḥem ha-Ḥevroni, a pilgrim who came from France in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, saw Muslims lighting candles on the tomb of Joshua b. Nūn and his disciple Caleb.[113] Rabbi Jacob the Messenger of Rabbi Yeḥiel of Paris and author of *These Travels* (*Elleh ha-Masaʿot*) writes in 1240, that in the burial cave of the Jewish sages Hillel and Shammai (sages of the late first century C.E.) in the Galilean village of Meron "Israelites and Ishmaʿelites come together on the seventh day of Passover, and the Israelites pray there and chant hymns. When they find water in the cave, they all rejoice, for it is a sign that the year will be blessed with rain. Many times when they found no water there, it appeared instantly as they were praying."[114]

Rabbi Jacob met Muslims at several other sites that were part of the map of the Jewish pilgrim to medieval Palestine. He found out that on the altar of Elijah on Mt. Carmel "the Ishmaʿelites kindle lights to the glory of that holy place," and that in ʿAwartā (a Samaritan village midway between Jerusalem and Nāblus) Muslims pray by the graves of the biblical priests Ithamar and Phineas the son of Eleazar (al-Manṣūrī, in Arabic) and in a cave which is the burial place of "seventy elders."[115] Ṣafad, Kefar ʿAmūqa, ʿAlam and Barʿam are other Galileen villages in which Jewish pilgrims observed Muslims partaking in the worship of local saints and supplying the place with oil.[116] According to Petaḥiya of Regensburg, who traveled in Palestine between 1170 and 1187, Jews and Gentiles come to the grave of the prophet Jonah son of Amittai in

[111] Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:159.
[112] Jacob b. Nathaniel, 9 (trans. in *Jewish Travelers*, 95).
[113] Reiner, "From Joshua," 232. For a different identification of Joshua's grave, see, p. 187, above.
[114] Reiner, *Pilgrims*, 227, 253–255; "From Joshua," 225, 269.
[115] Jacob the Messenger, *Elleh ha-Masaʿot* 145, 147, 153; trans. in Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 116, 117, 122. Curiously, the mention of Muslim pilgrimage to Meron is omitted from the English translation. For the cult of Elijah/al-Khaḍir see Meri, "Re-appropriating," 253–264.
[116] See Meri, *The Cult*, 243–244.

the vicinity of Hebron. The keeper of the sanctuary, who was a Gentile, offered the fruit of the garden surrounding it to Jewish pilgrims, saying that Jonah was one of them.[117] A couple of decades after Petaḥya's visit, the emir Badr al-Dīn al-Hakkārī, a veteran of many battles against the Franks, established a mosque on the tomb of Yūnus.[118]

The 'tower of David', known to Muslims as Miḥrāb Dāwūd, was identified by Jews, Christians and Muslims as the site of David's sin and repentance, a story told in each tradition in its particular way. According to the Qur'ānic version, which appears in *sūrat ṣād* (38:21–24), two litigants enter "a *miḥrāb*" to tell Dāwūd the story of the ewes, and make him understand that he was the unjust rich man who had oppressed the poor.[119] Arab geographers of the fourth/tenth century, and al-Wāsiṭī, in his *Faḍā'il al-Quds*, mention that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb visited the tower of David (which Christian pilgrims to Byzantine Jerusalem thought to have been the site of the composition of the Book of Psalms) upon his conquest of Jerusalem. Moreover, he is said to have appropriately recited *sūrat ṣād* on the spot, thus establishing the connection between the Qur'ānic story and the place.[120] When Saladin recaptured the city, he renewed this connection. 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, who probably was with him, writes that the sultan "provided for its restoration and appointed an *imām*, two muezzins and servants. It is a station for the pious and a place visited by travelers. He renewed it and renovated it and restored its doorway for visitors."[121]

Abū Shāma speculates that the *ziyāra* to the graves of the Patriarchs in Hebron became customary only after Saladin's reconquest of most of Palestine. He is probably wrong: there is evidence on much earlier Muslim pilgrimage to Hebron, and on the combination of visits to the Prophet's tomb and to the tombs of the Patriarchs (early traditions

[117] Petaḥya of Regensburg, *Die Rundreise*, 31; trans. in Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 87–88. His travelogue contains an interesting description of Muslim-Jewish veneration of the tomb of the prophet Ezekiel and his disciple Baruch b. Neriah, and of the Mishnaic sage Rabbi Meir, whose tomb was sumptuously rebuilt after a flood, with the joint votive offerings of Jews and Muslims (Petaḥya, *Die Rundreise*, 11–18; trans. in Adler, *Jewish Travelers*, 72–78).

[118] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 108. On the tombs of Jonah/Yūnus in the Muslim tradition, see Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints*, 294; Tamari, "Nabī Yūnus."

[119] The story received extensive Islamic commentary, which usually articulates a milder view of his sin than does the Bible (Busse, "The Tower," 145–148).

[120] Busse, "The Tower," 155.

[121] Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Fatḥ*, 68; trans. in Busse, "The Tower," 158; Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 2:114.

even recommend a visit to the Tomb of Abraham instead of a visit to the tomb of the Prophet in times of war and road closures, or as the "*ḥajj* of the poor").[122] Yet, Abū Shāma probably has a point: the first explicit itinerary of a tour of holy places in the vicinity of Hebron (Southern Palestine) dates to the late twelfth century. It is al-Harawī's, who lists the sites in the following order: Rachel's Tomb—Bethlehem—Ḥalḥūl—Rāma—Kafar Barīk—al-Yaqīn—Hebron.[123] Only in the thirteenth century does the name al-Khalīl (the friend—Abraham's epithet in Muslim lore) emerge as the actual name of the city, which until then was referred to in Muslim sources as Ḥabra or Ḥabrūn, linking it even more closely to the patriarch. Moreover, it becomes the counterpart of Jerusalem, as one of *al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn*, a term earlier reserved for Mecca and Medina.[124] In 664/1265 Baybars enhanced its Islamic character by forbidding entry of Christians and Jews (who, until then, were admitted on payment to the sanctuary of Abraham).[125]

The historian Abū Shāma and the jusrisconsult al-Nawawī ridicule the ignoramuses who think that a visit to Jerusalem and Hebron is an integral part of the *ḥajj* (*min tamām al-ḥajj*), or that it secures entrance into Paradise.[126] Whether the Ayyūbid prince al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam, who enlarged the building of the *ḥaram* of Hebron a couple of decades after the 1187 reconquest, shared this notion, we do not know. We do know that he endowed the income of two villages for the costs of the construction, the salaries of keepers, the oil needed to illuminate the place, and the hosting of pilgrims, traditional to Hebron from an even earlier age. In Nāṣir Khusraw's description of 439/1047, the hundreds of pilgrims who visited the place daily received bread, olives and lentils with raisins, cooked in olive oil.[127]

[122] See Kister, "Sanctity," 27–29; Elad, "Pilgrims," 27–28. Sharon, "al-Khalīl."
[123] Elad, "Pilgrims," 45.
[124] Elad, "Pilgrims," 25; Sharon, "al-Khalīl."
[125] Pedersen, "Masdjid," 654. When the Franks were in charge, Muslims had to buy their way in: see Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 78–79.
[126] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 283–84. Al-Nawawī criticized *Faḍāʾil al-Shām* traditions in general, noting that they are popular among common folk—*ʿawāmm ahl al-Shām* (see Cobb, "Virtual Sacrality," 37, n. 9).
[127] See *RCEA*, 10:105, and Lev, *Charity*, 133–134.

6.5. *Relics of the Prophet*

There is no tradition claiming that the Prophet dwelled in Syria, or was buried in its ground, but there are traditions about his visit to a number of localities during the *isrāʾ*—his miraculous night journey. Many eschatological traditions, locating battles of Dajjāl (Antichrist) and the occurrences expected on the Day of Judgment in Jerusalem, Damascus, and other Syrian sites were in circulation. The Prophet's cult in Syria was upheld both through the devotional reading of *ḥadīth*, in the private and public spheres,[128] and through the veneration of relics associated with him.

A wooden spear that belonged to the Prophet was to be found, according to tradition, in the village of al-Mālikiyya in Ḥawrān.[129] Al-Muqaddasī mentions, with no further detail, that a mantle of the Prophet (one he had received in Tabūk on the ninth year of the *hijra*), and a treaty dictated by him and written on parchment, were kept in Adhrūḥ.[130] A footprint of the Prophet, stamped in a piece of Basalt from Ḥawrān and transported to Damascus in the middle of the twelfth century, was first kept in al-Madrasa al-Mujāhidiyya, and later in the sanctuary of Sayyida Ruqayya, the daughter of the Prophet and his first wife Khadīja. Both relics were transferred to Damascus on the explicit orders of rulers, no doubt to the dismay of the people in their former abode.[131] Al-Harawī was introduced to another footprint of the Prophet during his visit to Baṣra. Even though he was uncertain of its authenticity (*ṣiḥḥatihi*), he begged the man who owned it to sell it to him. Finally, he purchased the relic for the sum of twenty-four *dīnār*s. Veneration of the Prophet and belief in the *baraka* of relics, so prevalent in his time, made it worthwhile.[132]

The Ayyūbid sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf especially constructed a college for the study of prophetic tradition (*dār al-ḥadīth*) to house

[128] For Ayyūbid investments in the public recitation of *ḥadīth* and in institutions for its study, see Pouzet, *Damas*, 182–199; Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ," 481, 483.

[129] Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 2:22; Meri, *Lonely Wayfarer*, 36.

[130] Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 178; trans. in Collins, *The Best*, 49; Wheatley, *The Places*, 417.

[131] Mouton, "Reliques," 246–48.

[132] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:713, 716; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:45–46, and see also Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 210–13; Mouton, "Reliques," 246–247.

a sandal of the Prophet. Al-Malik al-Ashraf, who is described by his contemporaries as a God-fearing man of simple faith, and a great admirer of ascetics and Ṣūfīs, was deeply moved by this relic when he first saw it. According to the historian al-Yūnīnī, the sultan invited his father, Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 617/1220), to come to Damascus and have a look at the relic. Al-Yūnīnī's grandmother, who had heard all about it, expressed her desire to see it as well, and al-Malik al-Ashraf granted her wish by sending the relic temporarily to Baʿlabakk. He is said to have yearned to keep the sandal, or at least part of it, in his possession (to be buried with it, according to al-Yūnīnī). Virtuously, he changed his mind, in order to preserve its integrity, and decided to make it accessible to all believers. Only after the former custodian of the sacred relic—a traveler by the name of Niẓām al-Dīn ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (scion of a family of Damascene notables), who probably made his living displaying the relic in various places and collecting gifts in return[133]—formally bequeathed it to him upon his death (in 625/1228), did al-Malik al-Ashraf deposit the sandal in the newly built college.[134] While the combination of the cult of the Prophet as a saint with the 'academic' study of his lore may seem somewhat surprising to us, in the eyes of medieval observers it must have been natural.[135] By the construction of the sanctuary for the sandal, al-Malik al-Ashraf undoubtedly strengthened his prestige and popularity in Damascus for generations to come. Until carried away by Tamerlame in 803/1401, the sandal was one of the main tourist attractions of Damascus. People used to visit it and copy its form on paper or leather for talismanic use.[136] Its twin sandal was placed in the Madrasa Dammāghiyya, founded by ʿAisha—the widow of Shujāʿ al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. al-Dammāgh, a boon companion of Sultan al-Malik al-ʿĀdil—in 638/1240–41. How she obtained it, and who authenticated it for her, remain a mystery.[137]

The Andalusī traveler Ibn Rushayd al-Fihrī, who visited Dār al-Ḥadīth

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[133] For the earlier history of the sandal see al-Munajjid, *Madīnat Dimashq*, 200. For Chamberlain's intepretation of al-Ashraf's gets see his *Knowledge*, 49.

[134] In this case (see Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ," 481–483), and in the consecration of a sanctuary in honor of al-Khaḍir in the district of Manbij (see Meri, "Re-appropriating," 257–58), the accounts are quite detailed. Yet, we cannot but envy historians of the European Middle Ages for the significantly richer accounts of the translation of relics, their authentication, shrine building and shrine-consecration in their sources.

[135] For a reminiscent case in fifteenth century Cairo, see Berkey, "Tradition," 38–39.

[136] Dickinson, "Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ," 484.

[137] Humphreys, "Women," 38.

al-Ashrafiyya in Damascus during 684/1285, left a detailed description of the richly decorated niche that sheltered the relic. It was located in the southern wall of the building, on the left hand side of the *miḥrāb*; while copies of the Qur'ān were kept in the niche on the right hand. The door of the niche was made of gold-colored brass, with three silken drapes—green, red and yellow—hanging from it. The sandal rested in a special box made of ebony and held together by silver nails. A salaried custodian was in charge of exposing the sandal to the public twice a week—on Mondays and Thursdays. Visitors used to touch it, in the hope of acquiring some of its *baraka*. Ibn Rushayd, perhaps unaware of this particular arrangement, arrived on the wrong day. Nevertheless, in his eagerness to touch the relic, he managed to persuade the professor of the *madrasa* to order the custodian to make a special concession and open the place for him. Ibn Rushayd reports happily that his health was indeed restored thanks to the blessings of the sandal.[138]

6.6. *Discussion and Conclusions*

To conclude this part, we must account for what seems to have been a significant growth and expansion of the veneration of tombs and relics, both Shī'ī and Sunnī, in twelfth-thirteenth century Syria. Peter Brown, one of the great authorities on the cult of saints, suggests that its rise in the Christian world of late antiquity occurred as a result of the appropriation of a deep-rooted early cult by high-ranking church authorities, who vigorously orchestrated and mobilized it in accordance with their needs.[139] In light of the stories presented above, it seems as if in our case, the initiative did not, regularly, originate with religious or secular authorities; rather, it came from laymen: military and civilian functionaries, men and women of their households, common folk in towns and villages. Rulers were sometimes responsible for the translation of relics and their proper housing in Syrian centers. Once erected, sites continued to develop thanks to *awqāf* dedicated by rulers or members of the elite, as well as contributions of goods and labor offered by local artisans and farmers, amongst them Muslims of relatively marginal groups, who played only a minor role in the institutions

[138] Ibn Rushayd al-Fihrī, as quoted by al-Maqqarī. See al-Munajjid, *Madīnat Dimashq*, 198–199.
[139] Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 8–10, 33–49.

of established religion. Here, popular piety, local interests, and Zangid and Ayyūbid domestic and foreign policies converged, contributing to the consolidation of the cult of the holy dead, and the visitation of the sites of their blessed activity or martyrdom. As we have seen, it was a cult inclusive of all social groups, incorporating *ʿulamāʾ* as well as commoners.

Ibn Shaddād's comment on Muslim veneration of a site sanctified by the Latin Franks during the decades of their rule in northern Syria (see p. 189, above), suggests the influence of the Frankish conquest and rule on the intensification of the cult of holy sites throughout the region. Several modern scholars have explored that line of investigation. Emmanuel Sivan eloquently argues for the connection between the Crusades and the enhanced sanctity of Jerusalem in Islamic thought and politics.[140] Elchanan Reiner regards the development of Jewish (primarily Ashkenazi) pilgrimage routes, values and traditions in medieval Palestine to be a mirror image of contemporary Latin pilgrimage.[141] Joseph Sadan suggests that pilgrimage to prophets' graves in central Syria thrived, because those in Palestine were difficult to access during the crusading period, while Jean-Michel Mouton highlights the translation of relics endangered by the approaching Franks to a safe haven in adjacent Muslim territory, and its byproduct—new sites for pilgrimage.[142] Inadvertently, the Franks 'contributed' to the Muslim cult of graves in another way: they enriched the repertoire of Muslim saints and graves of saints by taking their toll of Muslim martyrs of *jihād*. Yet, the influence of the Latin conquest is hard to isolate from the other factors. For one, saint and grave veneration were known in Islam long before the Crusades, and were widely practiced in areas that had never come under their influence. Two, traditions about the special virtues of Syrian personalities and places had been in circulation for centuries, perhaps even since the Islamic conquest.[143]

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[140] Sivan, "Le caractère sacré," 149–150; *idem*, "Faḍāʾil."

[141] Reiner, "A Jewish Response"; *idem*, "Overt Falsehood," 159, 161, 171.

[142] Sadan, "Le tombeau," 71–72; Mouton, "Reliques," 247. Shortly before the fall of Ascalon to the Franks, the remains of Ḥusayn were discovered there. In the summer of 548/1153, they were translated to Cairo by the Fāṭimids (al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 1:427; Stewart, "Popular Shiism," 55).

[143] On this last point see Cobb, "Virtual Sacrality," 36; Sadan, "Le tombeau," 71–72; Mouton, "Reliques," 247.

Other developments in Islamic-Syrian society and culture seem to be of relevance as well; notably, the growing importance of the Ṣūfī shaykh in society, and the elaboration of the doctrine about holy men and their powers in this world and after death. As Van Ess puts it "in Ibn al-ʿArabī's times, the miracle worker, as well as the speculative genius, had become common figures . . . the number of those who shook their heads and complained about this insight being irrational, or close to Gnosticism, had decreased."[144] Ibn al-ʿArabī's contemporary, the *faqīh* and *khaṭīb* ʿAbd al-Salām al-Sulamī, describes the Ṣūfī friends of God (*awliyāʾ*) as carriers of inspired higher knowledge, and advocates the authenticity of *karāmāt*.[145] In Joseph Meri's discussion of the reasons for the formation of the Muslim cult of saints, the immediate social and spiritual incentives outweigh the influence of the doctrines and creeds of the learned.[146] I agree, however, with Richard McGregor, who speculates that doctrines of sainthood played some role even among the unlettered masses.[147] What, in my estimation, exerted a major influence, was the intense overall religious climate of the Zangid and Ayyūbid period. For the unlettered masses, visits to holy sites, their routine upkeep, and the establishment of new sanctuaries were fine outlets of piety in a 'pious age'. In some cases they were also a reliable source of income and prestige.

Until the middle of the thirteenth century, Syrian *ziyāra*s were typically a private endeavor, exercised in the company of family members, friends or fellow-students. Timing was determined by personal circumstances. *Mawsim*s (festivals) and *mawlid*s (saints' days; literally: birthdays) of the kind that drew large crowds on specific dates in the later Mamlūk and Ottoman periods,[148] are rarely mentioned in Syrian sources of the Ayyūbid period. A notable exception is the *mawlid* of the Prophet, said to have been celebrated for the first time in a large public gathering in Irbil in the 620's/1220's (with no claim made that the Prophet was buried there rather than in Medina, of course).[149] Most

[144] Van Ess, "Sufism and its opponents," 35.
[145] Gramlich, *Die Wunder*, 125, 241.
[146] Meri, *The Cult*, 70–71.
[147] McGregor, online review.
[148] See Fuchs, "Mawlid," 895–897; Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 63–65; Kaptein, *Muḥammad's Birthday*, 38–43; Kraemer, "Jewish Cult," 589–590.
[149] Fuchs, "Mawlid," 895; Kaptein, *Muḥammad's Birthday*, 31. Kaptein alludes to celebrations in Nūr al-Dīn's times. On earlier celebrations of *Mawlid al-Nabī* in Medina and Mecca, see Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 114–15; trans. Broadhurst, *Travels*, 110–143.

Syrian sites, notwithstanding Jerusalem, Damascus and Hebron, drew local devotees; usually pilgrims from afar visited them only if they happened to be in the vicinity. As far as we can tell, the Muslim sites in Syria (in contrast with Jewish pilgrimage sites in Palestine at that period) were not part of a continuous trajectory, except, perhaps, for the joining of the tomb of Muḥammad in Medina with Abraham's tomb in al-Khalīl (Hebron) and with the holy places in Jerusalem.[150]

Had medieval Muslim pilgrims to sites associated with holy men been asked to phrase the purpose of their visit, they would have, most likely, used the terms, or 'code words', *baraka* (blessing) and *shafāʿa* (intercession). Yet, Muslims of different social strata and varying levels of religious education seem to have had diverse interpretations of the manifestations of *baraka*, and perhaps different perception of the working of intercession, and the significance of pilgrimage, as well. Men of simple faith, whether shepherds, sultans, or emirs, seem primarily to have expected the resolution of personal problems through the intervention of a venerated saint, whose place they visited. Scholars may have hoped also for inspiration and revitalization of faith; warriors—for courage and zeal;[151] and Ṣūfīs—for a mystical experience or apparition.

Some of the devotions associated with obtaining *baraka* entailed making direct physical contact with the place, or with earth, water and items taken from its environs. Other practices resembled rituals associated with the mosque—prayer, Qurʾān recitation, the undertaking of vows, temporary retirement from society, endowments of *waqf*s for the maintenance of the building, and donations of oil and lamps for its routine illumination.

There seems to be a general assumption among modern scholars, that women were more attracted to saint worship than men, both because of their limited opportunities to participate in official religion, and because

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150 Pouzet, *Damas*, 348–349. Ibn Murajjā of Jerusalem (eleventh century) transmits an interesting tradition about early ascetics who used to travel annually from Baṣra (where they visited their shaykhs) to ʿAbadān (where they spent Ramaḍān), then to Mecca (for the *ḥajj*), Jerusalem (for prayer), Ṭarsūs (for a *ghazwa*), and finally back to ʿAbadān (where they staffed a military strong-hold; "*fa-yurābiṭūna fīhā*"). See Livne-Kafri, "Jerusalem," 84.

151 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1994, 7:3172; trans. in Meri, *The Cult*, 202.

it allowed them to get away, for a while, from the strict supervision of male relatives.[152] In the corpus of sources surveyed for this chapter (all written by men, of course), women indeed fulfill leading roles in the establishment and upkeep of sanctuaries, but there is no clear evidence that they practiced *ziyāra*s more than men.[153]

[152] Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 44; Shoshan, "High Culture," 83.
[153] Neither does Joseph Meri (Meri, *The Cult*, 169). The Ashkenazi Rabbi Haim of Magdeburg (late thirteenth or early fourteenth century) mentions women together with uneducated men, in a responsum articulating his opposition to pilgrimage to particular graves, the reason being that they might pray directly to the dead (see Horowitz, "Speaking," 305).

PART THREE

PIETY, IMPIETY AND RELIGIOUS DISSENT

CHAPTER SEVEN

PIETY

> True piety (*birr*) is this: to believe in God, and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets, to give of one's substance, however cherished, to kinsmen, and orphans, the needy, the traveler, beggars, and to ransom the slave, to perform the prayer, to pay the alms (*zakāt*). And they who fulfill their covenant, when they have engaged in a covenant, and endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship and peril, these are they who are true in their faith, these are the truly godfearing (*al-muttaqūn*). (Qur'ān, 2:177).

Up to this point, we have investigated four arenas of public religious activity. Based on these investigations, and on additional material highlighting various aspects of private and public conduct of individual Muslims and their ideas of religious devotion, I will examine, in the first section of this chapter, the perceptions and practices of personal piety in Zangid and Ayyūbid Syria. Here, I have found it necessary to treat men and women of different social groups separately, and to accordingly formulate several role models of piety and righteousness: those of the pious ruler, the pious emir, the pious scholar, and the pious 'ordinary' Muslim (as constructed from bits and pieces in the multiple sources used in this work). The discussion of each model is an attempt to decipher the various meanings attributed to specific practices that were held to express religious commitment and feeling, and includes an analysis of their social functions. The final part of this section is a discussion of the two trends I find to have been the most influential in shaping perceptions of proper belief and righteous conduct in twelfth–thirteenth century Syria: moderate Sufism and moderate Ḥanbalism.

The second chapter of this part deals with contemporaneous perceptions of impiety and dissent. While it would be inconceivable for us to put ourselves in the position of the inquisitor and make a positivistic catalog of 'practices of impiety' (parallel to the catalog of pious practices, which emerges quite readily from the earlier discussion), other strategies are hampered by the fact that the direct voices

of medieval dissenters were only rarely preserved. Therefore, in this chapter, discourse analysis receives pride of place. It is, inevitably, the discourse of mainstream scholars: their strategies of coping with the challenges posed to their authority, their construction of impiety and deviation from established religious norms, and their additional mechanisms of control and exclusion. This discussion, in contrast with the previous one, is not divided into sections along the lines of social groupings, but according to the type of practice or belief generally held to contradict mainstream sensibilities regarding correct behavior and doctrine. These include the following categories: occupation with occult sciences (such as astrology); involvement with the study and teaching of the 'sciences of the ancients' (*'ulūm al-awā'il*), such as philosophy (*falsafa*); self-proclaimed prophetic inspiration, a bond with a *jinn* or the devil, unruly antinomian Sufism, and supposedly misguided (if not outright heretical) theological doctrines. Moreover, common to all the categories in this list is the alleged reliance on a source of authority and power exterior to Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, or, from the perspective of the *'ulamā'* of established institutions, on misinterpretations of those sources. In the preceding chapters of this book, we have focused on the consolidation of Sunnism and the construction of social solidarity, and have dealt only sporadically with groups that were left on the margins, or outside the boundaries of the consensus. The following section places them at the center.

7.1. *Piety of Military and Scholarly Elites*

Bahā' al-Dīn ibn Shaddād, Saladin's secretary and close companion, elaborates on the sultan's virtues (*manāqib*) in the first part of his biography, *al-Nawādir al-Sulṭāniyya* (*The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*). He begins with "an account of his adherence to religious beliefs and observance of matters of Holy Law," which is a section dedicated to the description of Saladin's commitment to each one of the five pillars of Islam. The next sections are devoted to the sultan's virtues as a ruler and leader, most of which have a significant religious quality: justice, generosity, courage, zeal for *jihād*, endurance, forbearance, clemency, and chivalrous behavior.[1] A nearly contemporary model of

[1] Ibn Shaddād, *Sīrat al-Sulṭān*, 55–88; trans. in Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 4, 17–38; Little, "Historiography," 416. For a somewhat similar list, based upon late medieval Egyptian pilgrimage guides, see Taylor, *In the Vicinity*, 89.

sultanic piety may be found in Ibn ʿAsākir's catalog of Nūr al-Dīn's virtues: an aptitude for religious learning, adherence to the *sharīʿa* (he especially mentions prayer, almsgiving and fasting), modesty and restraint, courage and leadership in battle, justice and generosity.[2] The generosity of the two sultans was expressed, in a typical manner, by the funding of religious and public institutions, the establishment of endowments for the benefit of the poor and needy, mystics and foreigners; the ransom of slaves and prisoners of war, largesse towards scholars and Qurʾān reciters who were not necessarily in need; the support of the *ḥajj*, and contribution towards the maintenance of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.[3] The close relations maintained by both sultans with the scholarly class, and their receptiveness to the advice and guidance of *ʿulamāʾ* are singled out. As Yaacov Lev rightly observes, many of those practices signified not only religious piety, but royal authority and power, and had a prominent political dimension, insofar as they were sources of legitimization of rule.[4] The beneficence of female members of the ruling houses and of emirs of lesser ranks, as studied in depth by Stephen Humphreys,[5] may also have been motivated by the competition for prestige and power within the ranks of the elite. Yet, these practices were clearly regarded as an indication of piety by contemporaries. This must have been the understanding of the historian Ibn Wāṣil, writing about the ruler of Mosul, ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Mawdūd b. Zangī: "he was very religious; he built a mosque in his neighborhood, and he used to go and pray there (*wa-kāna dayyinan khayyiran, ibtanā bi-jiwārihi masjidan fa-kāna yakhruju ilayhi, wa-yuṣallī fīhi*)."[6] Abū Shāma presents in a similar manner the building projects of the emir Badr al-Dīn al-Hakkārī (d. 615/218–19): a *madrasa* in Jerusalem and a mosque in the vicinity of Hebron. He mentions those projects immediately after having praised the emir for his religiosity, long prayers, fear of God, and kindness towards the poor and needy.[7]

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[2] Lev, *Saladin*, 6–7. On justice as an accented and publicly demonstrated quality of Zangid and Ayyūbid rulers, see Rabbat, "Ideaological Significance," 4.

[3] See Lev, *Charity*, 28–35. For the function and scope of pious endowments in medieval Middle Eastern cities, see *ibid*., 68–74.

[4] Lev, *Charity*, 45–52; *idem*, "Piety," 309.

[5] Humphreys, "Women," 48–49. Many women, most of whom belonged to the ruling house and to families of emirs, endowed *madrasa*s, mosques, Ṣūfī lodges and sanctuaries, and showed generosity to the poor (see also Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 53; Berkey, *Transmission*, 144, 161–167; Lev, *Charity*, 31–32).

[6] Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 3:21.

[7] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 108.

A different face of exemplary piety in the ranks of the military elite is presented by Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī. In his laudatory necrology of the *atābeg* Shihāb al-Dīn b. Tughril (d. 631/1233–4), a liberated *mamlūk* of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir, Shihāb al-Dīn is described as an ascetic. He is said to have spent the first third of his nights reading "stories of righteous men and their devotions and good deeds (*ḥikāyāt al-ṣāliḥīn wa-aḥwāl al-nās wa-maḥāsinihim*)." After short sleep, he would rise again in order to pray and recite the Qurʾān for the rest of the night.[8] The emir ʿAlī ibn al-Salār, who repeatedly served as *amīr al-ḥajj*, used to weep with all his heart at sermons. His piety is implicitly alluded to by the renowned ascetic Rabīʿ al-Mardīnī, who chose him, of all people, to wash and prepare his corpse for burial. Furthrmore, the dying shaykh used his wondrous powers to bring the emir to his side in the nick of time.[9]

In a narrative that is at once both touching and hard-to-stomach, Abū Shāma portrays the venerable piety of another *mamlūk*, a young Turk, as revealed under the most extreme imaginable circumstances: the painful forty eight hours of his dying on the cross, on one of the thoroughfares of Damascus. Abū Shāma, who claims that he was crucified for killing his master in self-defense, highlights the young man's fine record as a fighter of *jihād*, his firm religiosity, and his tranquility, courage, forbearance, and resignation to God's decree.[10]

The pious scholar, namely, the *ʿālim* whose perfect way of life rather than the magnitude of his learning was exemplary,[11] appears as a humble ascetic, immersed in prayer and other devotions, beneficent (*mufīd*) to his students and fellow men, compassionate and generous. The Ḥanbalī and pro-Ḥanbalī authors who raised Abū ʿUmar (the shaykh of the Ṣāliḥiyya neighborhood during the last decades of the twelfth century)[12] to the rank of saintliness, stress his care for the community and his scrupulous devotion to socio-religious obligations. They mention that he visited the sick, provided the poor with food and clothing, attended

[8] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:685. See, in contrast, the ridiculing of the extremely shortened prayer of "the Turks" in Jerusalem (p. 113 n. 20, above). See also al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyān*, 32–33, on the merits of nocturnal reading of the Qurʾān.

[9] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:579; Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 104.

[10] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 180–181.

[11] Such as the Ḥanbalī Shaykh ʿImād al-Dīn, who "did not find time for writing because of his devotion to study and good works—*wa-lā-kāna yatafarraghu li-l-taṣānīf min kuthrat ishtighālihi wa-ashghālihi*" (Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:48).

[12] See p. 97, above.

funerals, taught Qur'ān and gave basic religious instruction to ordinary believers, worked for the general good in various ways, and enlisted for *jihād*.[13] *Ṭalab al-shahāda*—the active quest for martyrdom on the battlefield, or merely the expression of the will to die 'in the way of God'—was also attributed to him, as to other scholars of the same circles, who, in truth, only rarely had the opportunity to fulfill such a wish.[14] Abū Umar's cousin, ʿImād al-Din al-Maqdisī, another explicit role-model of pious scholars, similarly devoted his days and nights to his students, taught and fed the poor, and (gently) corrected faulty prayer. He also bravely performed the Qur'ānic obligation of commanding right and forbidding wrong (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahyi ʿan al-munkar*) by admonishing violent drunkards, in line with the special commitment of Ḥanbalīs to the performance of *al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf*, even in the face of a hostile and violent crowd.[15] Above all, ʿImād al-Din al-Maqdisī is said to have been extremely humble, a trait he exhibited both in his attitude towards all fellow men, and in his tremendous caution when in the role of jurisconsult (*muftī*).[16]

In the writing of circles that put stronger emphasis on learning, the pious scholar was constructed as one who exhausts himself with study, and acquires and transmits knowledge with purity of intention, devoid of worldly ambitions and objectives.[17] Diligence was held in high regard,[18] as attested to by the great number of students whose names adorn the pages of many biographical entries.

Keeping distance from rulers and rejecting their offers of jobs and patronage were traditionally considered a mark of the truly pious scholar, as was boldness to rebuke rulers and correct their ways. The early topoi of the self-sufficient unworldly scholar, and of the fearless sermonizer, persist in the discourse of writers of the later period we are dealing with.[19] Direct criticism of scholars who maintained warm relationships with such rulers as Nūr al-Dīn, Saladin, or later members

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[13] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:5–9.
[14] See Talmon-Heller, "Muslim Martyrdom."
[15] See Cook, *Commanding*, esp. 145–164.
[16] Dhahabī Siyar, 22:48–50.
[17] Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 126, 162. See the case of al-Ruṣāfī, pp. 122–23, above. On the purity of intention demanded of the *muqri'*, see al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyān*, 19–20.
[18] The impossibly huge volume of al-Nawawī's writing is described as a *karāma* (Gramlich, *Die Wunder*, 268).
[19] See, for example, the case of Hibat Allāh Ibn al-ʿAdīm, p. 81 above.

of the Ayyūbid house, however, is rarely pronounced in our sources. Hundreds of well-respected *ʿulamāʾ* held religious and administrative posts in the course of their careers, and their biographers (some of whom had similar careers) refrain from the slightest hint of blame. The sources only seldom portray scholars who rebuked rulers, although we do know of several preachers and prayer leaders who denied rulers the honorary gestures they were expected to receive at the Friday-noon sermon, on the grounds that they fell short of Islamic standards, and were wanting in their devotion to *jihād*.[20]

The competition within the ranks of those *ʿulamāʾ* who aspired to leadership in piety, and hoped for the prestige of the truly devoted guardians of the *sunna*, seems to have resulted in excessive fuss over minor details of ritual,[21] rather than in a struggle against rulers. Uncompromising opposition to *bidʿa* as defined in a very conservative manner, and unswerving commitment to the purported ways of the first Muslims, expressed through harsh criticism of certain aspects of widespread pious practices, were applauded. Berkey has observed that *ʿulamāʾ* engaged in this discourse out of a deep convinction that they were performing "rearguard actions to defend an Islam they had inherited intact from earlier generations."[22] I would like to suggest that they employed it also because they associated (and constructed) change, especially in ritual, with laxity, infidelity and ignorance.

7.2. *Commoners*

It is difficult to draw a portrait of a specific, 'ordinary' twelfth century Muslim, but it is possible to suggest a tentative collective portrait of the piety of commoners. The impression conveyed by our sources is that the *sharīʿa*, omnipresent as it was in the public sphere, deeply affected the outlook, liturgical calendar, and daily practices of individuals as well. Even common people were aware of the demands of the religious law. They wished to live up to its standards, or at least looked up to it, regarding it as the symbol of proper social order, and a promise for

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[20] See pp. 99, 107, above.

[21] See pp. 61–64, above.

[22] Jonathan Berkey suggests interpreting "the polemics of such men as Ibn Taymiyya...as an attempt to assert control, to define authoritatively a cultural complex which had always been fluid and dynamic, but which...looked to their eyes to be on the verge of spiraling out of control" (Berkey, "Mamlūks," 168–169).

personal heavenly recompense. At the same time, they sought after *baraka* (blessing) emanating from holy men and from anything they had touched—clothes, water, food, books, and graves. The Qurʾān, first and foremost a text for study and for liturgical recitation, was also used as an amulet against evil by all Muslims. Certain Qurʾānic verses were known to the learned and to the illiterate alike to be particularly beneficial in cases of danger, illness, or temptation, and were recited by men in need, or vocalized by their shaykh for them.[23]

Commoners frequented study circles—the names of 'ordinary' men and women regularly appear in *samāʿāt* (lists documenting the names of those attendant at the reading of religious texts). We may presume that at least some of them came even if they could not follow the lecture, motivated not only by the high status of learning in Islamic culture, but also by the notion that occupation with the religious sciences (*ʿulūm al-dīn*) was pregnant with *baraka*. It was held to be available for all in attendance, including passive participants,[24] and even the dead. Therefore, men who could afford it located their mausolea as close as possible to *madrasa*s, and founders of *madrasa*s made plans to be buried in the institutions of learning they had patronized, and brought their relatives to burial within them for the same reason.[25]

The performance of the *ḥajj* (more so of multiple *ḥajj*s), accompanying elderly parents (especially mothers) on the pilgrimage, and spending time in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina were positive signs of religiosity, and sources of pride.[26] The *ḥajj* was considered as such a great blessing, that those remaining behind would go out to receive the returning caravan and touch the pilgrims in hope of attaining something of the *baraka* that surrounded them.[27] For men and women who could not afford pilgrimage to Mecca, and probably also for many who could, visits to local holy sites (on a regular basis, or on special occasions), their routine upkeep through the contribution of money, goods, or labor, and the partaking in the establishment of new sanctuaries—were appreciated in a similar manner. The visitation of

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[23] See Shaykh Ibn al-Qawām al-Bālisī, for example (Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:408).
[24] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 370; Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 122. On the participation of the illiterate in a culture of literacy, see Chartier, "Appropriation," 241.
[25] Humphreys, "Women," 38–49; Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 3.
[26] See Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:405; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:922; Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 28; Eddé, Alep, 420; pp. 113 and 164, above.
[27] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 286.

living shaykhs and ascetics, providing their food and clothing, going on errands for them, telling their deeds and publicizing their wonders, were additional manifestations of piety for simple believers, both male and female.[28]

Women and children were expected to pray regularly. It was the duty of fathers and teachers to implement this habit in their sons, and to punish them for sloppiness, at least from the age of seven.[29] Likewise, a husband, at least according to a *fatwā* issued by Abū Qāsim ibn al-Bazriyy (d. 560/1165), could beat his wife if she neglected her prayers ("*ʿalā tark al-ṣalāt*").[30] The role of women in the transmission of hagiographical and biographical materials, as recorded by the male authors who interviewed them, is noteworthy. Women also participated in public reading of texts, and sometimes fulfilled the role of *musmiʿ*—the attending authority in whose presence the text was read, or that of the lecturer.[31] Women's zeal for *jihād*, and their perseverance in face of the loss of husbands and sons, particularly as attributed to women of the past (such as the heroine of Ibn Qudāma's stories about the wars on the Byzantine frontier), were extolled in oral sermons and in written didactic works.[32] *Ṣabr*—patient endurance of pain and willing acceptance of God's decree were, of course, the exemplary traits of pious man.[33] Chastity was constructed, again and again, as the noble trait of pious Muslim women, one dearer than life.[34]

Medieval collections of *fatwā*s indicate that the search for the correct path to God, and the desire to devote oneself to His service, please Him (*ibtighāʾ riḍwān Allāh taʿālā*) and achieve His proximity (*qurba*)[35] bothered many a devout Muslim. We have no data about the formulators of those questions (assuming that they were authentic).

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[28] See examples in Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 91b, 92a, 93a, 94a, 95a, 95b; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 130, 133, 138, 139, 141, 143.

[29] Shayzari, trans. in Buckley.

[30] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7:253.

[31] See examples in Leder *et al.*, *Samāʿāt*, 69. See also Roded, *Women*, 28–30, 78–79, 84–86.

[32] See p. 130, above, and Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs*, 103. See also the story of the Ismāʿīlī mother who had hoped that her son achieved martyrdom on a 'suicide mission' in Mosul in 520/1126 (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 4:1970; and Roded, *Women*, 96, 47–48).

[33] See pp. 170–171, above.

[34] See, for example, Usāma Ibn al-Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, 145, 168; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:717, 752.

[35] Lev, *Charity*, 54.

It is unlikely that this material reflects the world of the lower classes, but they may reflect dilemmas of the urban middle class, not necessarily of the *ʿulamāʾ*. Al-Sulamī's collection of *fatwā*s contains some twenty questions on issues such as the renunciation of all created things (*tark al-khalāʾiq*), devotion to worship (*lazm al-ʿibāda*), and solitude (*khalwa*), supererogatory devotions and scrupulous care in the consumption of *ḥalāl* food ('kosher' in the moral sense). This last category includes the query of a man who exercised such caution with regards to the consumption of food that he practically starved himself, and became too frail to attend the Friday noon-prayer and fulfill other religious duties. Al-Sulamī expresses his disapproval of the foregoing of religious duties (*farāʾiḍ*) for the sake of excessive acts of piety (*waraʿ*).[36] His contemporaries, the *muftī*s al-Nawawī and al-Shahrazūrī, were asked for their opinion about asceticism (*zuhd*) within the world, by men torn between the ideal of seclusion (in the desert, in the wilderness of Mt. Lebanon, in a remote village, or in a minaret) versus combining righteous behavior with life in society. Both *muftī*s encourage the devout to choose a time that combines sincere devotion to God with the fulfillment of one's obligations towards family and other dependants. Al-Shahrazūrī insists that the study of the law supplement, or even precede the ascetic way.[37] Even if the above-mentioned learned authors had formulated the questions they deal with by themselves, the dilemmas must have been real and relevant. In both cases, the *muftī*s defend the primacy of the middle road and try to keep all expressions of piety, including those of fervent seekers, under control.

Biographical literature also points to dilemmas that ensued from the tension between contrasting models of piety: reclusive versus socially oriented, concentrated upon learning versus dedicated to asceticism. It portrays some men and women not affiliated with the scholarly vocation, who at an older age, or at a phase in life that presumably freed them from earlier responsibilities (such as widowhood, manumission, illness, or resignation from service), chose to retreat to a sanctuary and devote their whole time to the service of pilgrims and to devotional practices. Some did so after having undergone repentance (*tawba*), which moved them to change their habitual ways.[38]

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[36] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 267–268, and 194–195, 258, 282, 346, 392, 425, 440, 509; al-Shahrazūrī, *Fatāwā*, 29–31, 235.
[37] al-Shahrazūrī, *Fatāwā*, 169.
[38] See ch. 4.

According to Lev's evaluation, and Rosenthal's earlier insights on this matter, the socially involved ascetic was, in general, much more appreciated in Islamic society than the reclusive ascetic.[39] Moreover, mild asceticism—the self-denial of pleasures, and the insistence on the simplicity of food and clothing (accompanied, especially in Ḥanbalī circles, by austere abstinence from music and merry-making), humility and unassuming behavior—was considered compatible with life within society. According to the discourse of our sources, it could even go hand-in-hand with successful careers in the administrative or religious establishments.[40] At the same time, however, our sources convey ambivalence, reflecting also strong admiration towards recluses who imposed upon themselves severe hardships, either by retreating from society altogether, or by living on its margins, on the streets and in cemeteries of cities.[41]

7.3. *Trends in Religious Life*

Both Ṣūfī-like pietism and Ḥanbalī rigorism and activism had a firm grip on Ayyūbid society. As George Makdisi demonstrated years ago,[42] affiliation with both trends at the same time was possible and even common. Differences between them aside, the Ḥanbalī school and moderate Sufism had much in common. Both held careful observance of religious law in high regard, especially prayer, and valued pure intention (*niyya*). Both were hostile to *kalām* (rationalistic theology), and had a positive attitude towards the outward expression of religious emotion, and towards asceticism. Ḥanbalīs and Ṣūfīs preached introspection and repentance and the fear of God, and did not, at that stage in their history, refrain from contact with the religious and political establishment.[43]

The two trends underwent growth and empowerment during the Zangid and Ayyūbid periods. A historical-topographical survey of

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[39] Lev, "Piety," 310–311; Rosenthal, "I am You," 53–57.
[40] See Hurvitz, "Biographies, 50–75"; Lev, "Piety," 308.
[41] See below.
[42] Makdisi, "Sufism and Ḥanbalism," 115–126; *idem*, "Ḥanbalite Islam," 247–250.
[43] See also Ephrat, "From Wayfaring," 83.

Damascus demonstrates this process: around 535/1130, the Ḥanbalīs established a new mosque in the dark of night, having been denied permission to open a *madrasa* on the same spot. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, they erected a congregational mosque, partially financed by the sultan. In the period separating those two building projects, Ḥanbalīs established a new neighborhood and a new mosque on the outskirts of Damascus, and were accorded a *miḥrāb* (prayer niche) of their own in the Umayyad Great Mosque. The *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal was read out loud in a series of crowded assemblies, patronized by the ruler. During those same years, twenty three Ṣūfī lodges were built in Damascus, Ṣūfī recluses dwelled in its mosques, *dhikr* and *samāʿ* were performed in public.[44] Rulers endowed Ṣūfī institutions and honored Ṣūfīs and ascetics in public. The following scene, depicted by Ibn al-ʿAdīm, is a case in point: the ruler of Aleppo al-Malik al-Ẓāhir, who was a benefactor of the sciences and a patron of the philosopher al-Suhrawardī, got off his horse in order to request the *baraka* of the Ṣūfī Shaykh Rabīʿ al-Mardīnī.[45] Al-Ẓāhir's father, Saladin, had stipulated that the Ṣūfīs whom he had settled in the Khānqāh al-Ṣāliḥiyya in Jerusalem pray for him and for all the Muslims every afternoon and every Friday at sunrise, either at the *khānqāh*, or in the al-Aqṣā Mosque.[46]

Recourse to *baraka* did not contradict more learned perceptions: by the thirteenth century the existence of the friends of God (*al-awliyāʾ*) and the validity of their *baraka* and *karāmāt* (wondrous doings) were widely recognized in scholarly literature of sorts, well beyond Ṣūfī circles. The Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn Qudāma, for example, writes (in his theological treatise against *kalām*) with no hint of reproach, that "they [*al-awliyāʾ*] are a refuge to men afflicted by hardship, and kings and others of lesser ranks go out and visit them, and are blessed by their supplications (*yatabarrakūna bi-duʿāʾihim*), and appeal to God through their intercession (*yastashfiʿūna bihim*)."[47] ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī performed many readings of *Karāmāt al-Awliyāʾ* of al-Ḥasan

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[44] Gilbert, "Institutionalization," 117–118. For the spread of Ṣūfī influence and establishments in Palestine during that period see, Ephrat, "From Wayfaring," 100–104.
[45] Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 141. See also Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:406–407, for the various visitors of shaykh Ibn Qawām al-Bālisī.
[46] Pahlitzsch, "Concern," 340.
[47] Makdisi, *Ibn Qudāma*, 14; trans. (partly used here) *ibid*., 10.

b. Muḥammad al-Khalīl (d. 439/1047–8), at the Ḥanbalī study circle in the congregational mosque of Damascus, and in other, non-specified places.[48] Ibn Qudāma must have disapproved of commoners who fought for a scrap of the shrouds of their shaykh over his open grave, or scurried to dip their clothes in the water that had purified his body,[49] but rulers, and even scholars, also vied for blessed objects. The difference was that they could acquire them in more respectable ways, or receive them as presents.[50] Sufism had not reached the apogee of its influence in the Ayyūbid period. Michael Winter has noted that by the late Middle Ages "Sufism inherited the cherished position which *ḥadīth* held during the early centuries of Islam, both as a movement and as an *ʿilm*, an intellectual pursuit...the sphere in Islam where a ruler, an *ʿālim*, or a commoner could request a personal, or at least a partially creative and active participation in religion."[51] In the sixth–seventh/twelfth–thirteenth centuries, the recitation of *ḥadīth* and Qur'ān and the practice of *ziyāra* seem to have been at least as important marks of piety and spirituality as ascetic or Ṣūfī practices. Ḥanbalī activism seems to have had an equally important effect on the religious climate of the era. It was exercised regarding *jihād* (as expressed in treatises,[52] in the emigration of villagers from Frankish-ruled Mt. Nāblus,[53] in partaking in *ghazawāt* (raids) and in accompanying regular armies), by their uncompromising attitude towards what they regarded as heterodoxy, and their commitment to the *sunna*.[54] Prominent shaykhs of the two categories enjoyed the veneration of commoners and rulers, and were sought after for religious knowledge, or for blessing; often for both.

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[48] Leder, *et al., Samāʿāt*, 41.
[49] See p. 161, above.
[50] See p. 204, above, and Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 184–85.
[51] Winter, *Society and Religion*, 28–29.
[52] For example: ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī's *Tuḥfat al-Ṭālibīn fī al-Jihād wa-l-Mujāhidīn*, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī's *Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis* and *Faḍā'il al-Jihād*, Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma's chapter on *jihād* in his *al-Mughnī*. See also Sivan, *L'Islam*, 106–108, 141–143.
[53] See Drory, "Ḥanbalīs"; Talmon-Heller, "The Shaykh."
[54] The Ḥanbalī shaykh ʿImād al-Dīn is designated as "*dāʿiyan ilā al-sunna—calling to the sunna*" (Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:49).

CHAPTER EIGHT

IMPIETY AND RELIGIOUS DISSENT

While moderate Ḥanbalism and Sufism became mainstream trends, members of the radical Ḥanbalī and Ṣūfī traditions were labeled as dissenters, and charged with theological error and impious conduct. Similar charges are advanced, in our sources, also against Muslims of other affiliations. Let us first look at the vocabulary used by medieval Sunnīs to denote impiety and dissent. It is quite long, and the spectrum is wide, ranging from the derision of the *sharīʿa* (*istihzāʾ bi-l-sharīʿa*) by failing to pray regularly enough, to wholesale rebellion against it (*maʿṣiya*). The phrases *raqīq al-diyāna* (weak in his religiosity) or *qalīl al-dīn* (lacking in religiosity) are used for a Muslim considered not devout enough, while a dissenter of sorts may be called *mubtadiʿ* (innovator), or assigned the much harsher epithets *zindīq* or *mulḥid* (heretic or apostate).[1] Dissent was defined by acts (and the abstention from acts), as well as by beliefs (*ʿaqāʾid*). In the first category, we find the negligence of prayer and ritual ablutions, the consumption of wine, improper clothing, immodest sexual conduct, immoral behavior, the initiation of *bidaʿ*, the study and instruction of philosophy and the 'sciences of the ancients', and the employment of supernatural powers attributed to Satan or the *jinn*. The second category, that of dogmatic deviations, includes the denial of basic tenants of faith such as prophecy in its scriptural sense, the finality of Muḥammad's prophecy, the afterworld and the resurrection of the dead, or 'materialism' (*dahriyya*). Belief in wrong theological tenants (*sūʾ al-iʿtiqād* or *ḍalālat al-iʿtiqād* or *fasād al-ʿaqīda*), especially regarding the attributes of God, namely radical Ḥanbalī anthropomorphism (*tashbīh* or *tajsīm*), or Muʿtazilī total denial of all positive attributes of God (*inḥilāl* and *taʿṭīl*), were also regarded as reprehensible dissent by mainstream *ʿulamāʾ* and the rulers who supported them. Recourse to astrology was seen as an indication of weakness of belief, or as outright heresy, or as an aspect of the Shīʿa and Bāṭiniyya—unequivocally rejected sects in the Sunnī-revivalist

[1] For a discussion of these terms, see Lewis, "Some Observations," 52–57.

discourse of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. Excessive zeal for one's school, faction, or shaykh, was also condemned. It was designated by the pejorative term *taʿaṣṣub* (zealotry) and regarded as sectarianism, criticized as driven by impure motivations, and feared for its disruptiveness of the unity of the believers and their social cohesion.

There are many variations and combinations of those themes in the actual portraits of impious men and dissenters drawn in our sources. Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, for example, differentiates between wrong dogma (*sūʾ al-iʿtiqād*) and misconduct (*sūʾ al-madhhab*). In his manual for the inspector of public morals, he admits that a Muslim may be steadfast in his prayers and fasting, yet hold erroneous theological views.[2] Both allegations were mentioned by the Aleppan *fuqahāʾ* who dealt with the case of the philosopher Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī, and sentenced him to death in 587/1191.[3] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's short description of the *qāḍī* al-Rafīʿ al-Jīlī, who was put to death (or assassined) for corrupt handling of money, includes the following: "he upheld false doctrines; a materialist, lax in keeping the commandments of the holy law, he attended trials and Friday prayers intoxicated, and his house was like a brothel (*kāna fāsid al-ʿaqīda, dahriyan, mustahziʾan bi-umūr al-sharʿ, yakhruju ilā al-majlis sakrānan, wa-yakhḍuru ilā al-jumʿa ka-dhalika, wa-kānat dārihi ka-l-khānat*."[4] ʿAlī al-Ḥarīrī (d. 645/1247), the charismatic shaykh of the Ṣūfī company known as al-Ḥarīriyya, was charged with the whole stock: heresy (*zandaqa*), no fear of God (*lam takun lahu murāqaba*), the abandonment of the religious commandments (*tark al-siyar*), the open consumption of wine and pork, sexual libertinism and immoral behavior.[5] Another allegation that appears repeatedly in the sources about him—the corruption of youth from good, devout homes, who were drawn to the Ḥarīriyya and adopted its codes of dress and behavior[6]—may explain at least some of the animosity towards him.

Unquestionably, the label of impiety, more so, the stigma of heresy, were tied, in Ayyūbid Syria (as in any other polity), to political struggles and power relations: within the *ʿulamāʾ*, between *ʿulamāʾ* and

[2] Such as those of the Qadariyya, whom he labels "the Zoroastrians of this nation—*majūs hādhihi al-umma*" (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal*, 2:149). He recommends severe punishment for those who are theologically astray.

[3] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 6:272.

[4] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:163.

[5] He is quoted saying "do not deprive your self of anything—*lā tamnaʿu nafsaka shayʾ*" (al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 18).

[6] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1994, 13:203.

other groups (such as Ṣūfīs), and between *ʿulamāʾ* and ruling authorities. Scholars and rulers seem to have agreed that dissent from established religious norms was fraught with a rebellious potential.[7] Jonathan Berkey stresses that from the point of view of the *ʿulamāʾ*, the issue at stake was authority: scholars wished to secure their exclusive authority in the face of challenges of individuals resorting to non-canonical unsupervised sources: antinomian and antisocial Ṣūfīs, unlettered story-tellers and preachers. Hence, they often joined hands in an effort to marginalize, publicly condemn and even punish dissenters. Systematic persecution, however, or accusations of conspiracy against society, the poisoning of wells or the spread of epidemics—prevalent accusations against heretics (as well as lepers, Jews, Muslims and witches) in late medieval Europe[8]—were not characteristic of the society we are dealing with.[9]

In Michael Chamberlain's view, in thirteenth century Damascus, contests between representatives of competing definitions of correct belief were basically forms or outbursts of the never-ending competition within the elite. He estimates that "ruling groups were generally reluctant to interfere in such scholarly *fitna*s, in spite of the attempts of scholars to enlist them," and stresses the lack of formal procedures to investigate heterodoxy and repress it.[10] Ashtor, in contrast with Chamberlain, attributed to the Mamlūk authorities of Egypt a conscious policy of persecuting heretics, and an institutionalized inquisition that interrogated and tried suspects.[11] I will not argue for the existence of an institutionalized, legally constituted inquisition with clear procedures in the Ayyūbid period, of course. In any case, for the purposes of this work, the debate over the degree of the systematization and institutionalization of the persecution of dissent is beside the main point. It is the *content* of the struggles that merits attention, and in my view they should not be dismissed as mere contests for power. From the point of view of our medieval informants, correct belief, legitimate behavior, and the construction of boundaries between right and wrong indeed were at stake; not merely political benefits disguised as debates about religion.

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[7] Or in Lewis's words: "Whenever a group of men sought to challenge the existing order, they made their teaching a theology and their instrument a sect" (Lewis, "Some Observations," 62).

[8] Moore, *The Formation*; Ginzburg, *Eccstacies*, 33, 39.

[9] For explanations of the relative tolerance towards dogmatic deviance in Islam, see Goldziher, "Catholic," 126–130.

[10] Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 167–173.

[11] Ashtor, "L'inquisition."

8.1. *Recourse to Occult Sciences (al-ʿulūm al-ghaybiyya)*

The occult sciences—namely, the means by which men try to penetrate the invisible world and the mystery of the divine—are denounced in our sources explicitly and implicitly, on religious rather than on scientific grounds.[12] As is well known, normative Islam does not admit to the existence of powers other than those of God, nor to the idea that one can receive help from any but Him. Not only are the practices of astrology and sorcery forbidden, but also the belief in the efficacy of such practices and payment for them. Ascribing to the stars any influence upon human affairs, casting lots, and choosing one timing over another for certain actions other than according to the preferences and regulations of the *sharīʿa* (i.e. because of the astrological significance of that timing) are designated reprehensible. Hence, our sources preach the avoidance of astrologers (*munajjimūn*) and soothsayers of any sort.[13] Al-Nawawī quotes very explicit and even striking *ḥadīth*s to that effect, such as: "Whoever goes to a fortune-teller to ask him about something, and believes in him, will not have his prayers accepted for forty days;" and (with an admittedly weak chain of transmission): "Whoever visits a fortune-teller and believes in what he says, or enters a woman in her buttocks, had nothing to do with what has been revealed to Muḥammad."[14] A method of divination and consultation by the manipulation of the numbers and letters of the Qurʾānic text (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*), and by "dots and points,"[15] was attacked with special ferocity.[16] It may have been considered offensive to the holy Qurʾān, or perhaps to the scholars who interpreted it by conventional methods of exegesis.

Under some stressful circumstances, however, recourse to astrologers was overlooked, or regarded with lenience, even by puritan scholars. They had to admit that the ideally pious Saladin also consulted an astrologer: to be reassured that he would indeed liberate Jerusalem

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[12] We may assume, however, that in their view religious truth and scientific truth were identical. See Langerman, "Maimonides," 133 (regarding Maimonides on this issue).

[13] Saliba, "The Role"; Goldziher, "The Attitude," 196; Lorry, "Avant propos," 11–13; Michot, "Ibn Taymiyya"; Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 2:300; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 7:448.

[14] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 132–135; trans. in Calder *et al.*, *Classical Islam*, 201–202.

[15] See Fahd, "Ḥurūf"; and about symbolic interpretation of the dots and crowns over the letters of the Arabic alphabet see Canteins, "Hidden Sciences," 461.

[16] See O'Connor, "Popular," 169, 179; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 7:396; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal*, 2:148–149.

(he is said to have declared that the loss of both his eyes would be a trifle price for him to pay for the achievement of that mission).[17] But usually, chroniclers delight in exposing both the impiety of men who heed to the advice of astrologers, and the falsity of their expertise. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, for example, writes that a pair of astrologers governed al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl and directed his "abominable actions," until God ruined the three of them. Likewise, the forecast of the Jewish astrologer of al-Amjad Bahramshāh of Baʿlabakk that he would take hold of Damascus was cruelly refuted: Bahramshāh was assassinated on the very hour that was supposed to be propitious for him (*sāʿa saʿīda*).[18] Abū Shāma explains that only men of weak faith and little confidence in God (*man lā wuthūq lahu bi-l-yaqīn wa-lā-iḥkām lahu fī al-dīn*) were frightened by a prophecy of astrologers "from different countries," who claimed that in 581/1186, under a special astronomical constellation, the world will undergo a severe disaster. Other chroniclers treat the story more sarcastically, making fun of the poor wretches who made preparations and built refuges. They specifically mention a Damascene who planned to hide with his family in a cave in Mt. Qāsyūn, having thought that only cave dwellers will survive that day.[19] ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī indulges in a description of the peaceful evening he spent in the company of the sultan on that supposedly fateful date.[20] A similar proof of the folly of astrologers was articulated by the unidentified author of *al-Bustān al-Jāmiʿ*. He tells of Sudanese and Berber soldiers in Cairo, who were tempted to believe in the prediction of the astrologer Ibn al-Sinbaṭī that they would take hold of Cairo on a certain night in 588/1192. On the predicted date they took up arms, looted stores and freed Frankish prisoners of war (so that they would help them), while crying out Shīʿī slogans. The rebels and the *munajjim* were put to death.[21]

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[17] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 2:92, 94, 119–120; Sivan, "The Sanctity," 293–294. Ibn al-ʿAdīm also tells of a successful prediction based on *ʿilm al-nujūm*, one regarding the volatile career of the bookbinder Khālid al-Makhzūmī (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 7:3096–3101).

[18] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:788, 667.

[19] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn,* 2:131–133; Cahen, "Chronique," 145–146.

[20] al-Bundarī, *Sanā al-Barq al-Shāmī*, 283. For a thorough overview of the forecasts of western and eastern astronomers and astrologers regarding September 1186 see Weltecke, "Die Konjunktion." For other strategies of the opponents of astrology, see Langerman, "Maimonides," 141.

[21] Cahen, "Chronique," 150.

Dhahabī's biography of ʿAlī b. Ḥasan al-Ribāʿī *al-munajjim* (d. 680/1281) ends with the following comment: "Some of the *ʿulamāʾ* denounced him because of his occupation with astrology (*tarakūhu baʿḍu al-ʿulamāʾ li-ajli al-tanjīm*)."[22] Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ṭalḥa (d. 652/1254), a Damascene scholar and *khaṭīb*, who had some experience with *ʿilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-awqāt* (the science of letters and timings) and had attained some hidden knowledge ("*wa-innahu istakhraja ashyāʾ min al-mughayyabāt*"), is said to have renounced his former occupations himself. In a few poetic verses he writes: "when the astrologer foretells the future...he does not know what God decreed, listen to me and do not believe him...trust God alone and be saved, for if you believe that the stars have any affect on happening, you are no Muslim."[23]

8.2. *Claims to Prophecy and Wondrous Powers*

Claiming prophecy, a severe transgression of the boundaries of Islam, was sometimes ascribed to men of dubious origins. This is the case in the short and unsatisfying versions of the story of a self-proclaimed prophet of Maghribī descent, who became quite popular in the rural hinterland of Damascus around the death of Nūr al-Dīn in the 1170's. Ibn Kathīr describes the man as a trickster and swindler, who revolted against Damascus, followed by riffraff and rabble. When an army was sent to the region, the Maghribī and his men retreated to the mountains and hid in the brush. Upon Saladin's consolidation of power in Damascus, the man escaped to Aleppo, where, according to Ibn Abī Ṭayyiʾ, he taught his tricks to a woman he loved (!), and she too claimed to be a prophet (*iddaʿat al-nubūwwa*). The story provokes Ibn Kathīr to recall similar events from the early history of Islam, namely the case of the false prophets Musaylima and his female partner Shajjāḥ, two of the leaders of the *ridda* revolts against Abū Bakr. Returning to the case in point, Ibn Kathīr reports that on a day of a full solar eclipse, the man appeared in one of the villages in the vicinity of Aleppo to announce his prophethood. The army of Aleppo overtook him and 30,000 (!?) of his disciples.[24]

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[22] Dhahabī, *al-ʿIbar*, 3:344; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 7:640.
[23] Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 7:448.
[24] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1993, 12:357–358, Cahen, "Chronique," 141. Ibn al-Athīr

Ibn al-ʿAdīm's version is somewhat different: he does not mention Maghribī origins, and he locates the rebellion in the mountainous area between Aleppo and Antioch. He accuses the man of claiming to be [*al-mahdī*] *al-muntaẓar*—the awaited savior (Shīʿī undertones are very probable here), promising to subdue his enemies by miraculous means, while leading them to their bitter end.[25] This is the little we get to know about rebellious movements that drew men of the lower classes, especially villagers, with some religious message that was most likely combined with social and economic promises. Needless to say, the members of such groups did not record their activities. Contemporaneous chroniclers were probably ill-informed about them, or else preferred to belittle their doings, or perhaps to conceal them altogether.

Al-Jawbarī tells of the remnants of the disciples of another self-proclaimed prophet of the lower social strata—Isḥāq al-Ḥāris, a keeper in a *madrasa*, who interpreted the Qurʾān in his own eccentric way, and assigned religious ritual and law according to his whims. Al-Jawbarī adds a curse upon the heads of those men, who, so he says, still compose a *shīʿa* (faction) in ʿAmmān.[26] Abū Shāma mentions an *ʿajamī* (foreigner, non-Arab), who claimed to be ʿĪsā b. Maryam and "corrupted a party of commoners (*afsada jamʿan min al-ʿawāmm*)" in Damascus. He was crucified by its governor, Sārim al-Dīn Burghush, who acted upon a *fatwā* that found the man deserving death.[27] Another man who announced that he was ʿĪsā thirty years later, and acquired some recognition and following from amongst the Damascenes and the inhabitants of nearby villages, seems to have faired better. He retreated in time to one of the villages in the Ghūṭa of Damascus, and was probably left alone. Prior to his dramatic announcement he was known as a shaykh who performed wonders and could make trees bear fruit out of season.[28]

While the performance of wonders was thought absolutely feasible and valid by medieval Muslim scholars, let alone by commoners, the

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mentions the eclipse, but says nothing of these unusual events (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 11:433).

[25] The soldiers who came to repress the revolt killed the men, captured the women, and set fire in the caves that served as hiding places for the remainder of the group (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubda*, 3:25–26).

[26] Al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 5–6. For a few other cases of feigned prophets see *ibid.*, 7–11.

[27] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 16.

[28] Al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 15, told in Bosworth, *Majnūn*, 113.

piety, not to say saintly status, of those who performed wonders was not taken for granted. An earlier authority, Abū Saʿīd b. Abī al-Khayr (d. 1049), has famously warned that "Satan goes in one moment from the East to the West."[29] The later Ibn Taymiyya, albeit less picturesquely, asserted that "a premonition or inspiration about something, or supernatural deeds...allegedly occur [also] to many infidels, unbelievers and innovators."[30] His contemporary, the historian Ibn Kathīr, explains that the true condition of *wilāya* and *ṣalāḥ* (saintliness and righteousness) is strict adherence to the Qur'ān and *sunna*. He stresses that the demonstration of hidden knowledge or wondrous powers are no proof of righteousness—the sinner, the heretic, the madman, and the person possessed by Satan or the *jinn* may enjoy them just as well.[31] Men of the Ayyūbid period, scholars and commoners, concurred. For them, the wondrous ability of growing fruit out of season could be interpreted in two very different ways. When Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh of Salmiyya made a bare pear tree bear fruit for the breakfast of the small company of men that were with him,[32] it was described as a *karāma* of a *walī* (wondrous doing of a saint). Al-Jawbarī designates a similar performance by the above-mentioned self-proclaimed ʿĪsāʾ—a fraud. He also accuses the derwishes of the Ḥaydariyya of faking wonders and feats of asceticism. Similarly, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī presents the Maghribī stranger who appealed to many villagers in Mt. Nāblus by "feeding them honey and olive oil from the tip of his finger," as an associate (husband, to be more precise) of a female *jinn*.[33] In other words, Satan and the *jinn* were said to be the sources of supernatural powers of men whom the *ʿulamāʾ* could not, or would not, perceive as worthy of God's grace (which was, of course, the source of the uncommon capabilities of the truly pious). Surely, the distinctions between saint and sorcerer, righteous and impious, were heavily influenced by struggles over legitimate authority. Contests of power, political conflicts and social tensions were also at the background.[34]

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[29] Quoted in Denny, "Prophet and Wali," 93.
[30] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 53.
[31] Ibn al-Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:216.
[32] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 97b; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 149.
[33] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 94a; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 137.
[34] Compare this with the debate over legitimate and illegitimate forms of supernatural powers, Brown, *The Making*, 60. And see above, regarding the attribution of hidden knowledge.

8.3. *Occupation with the 'Sciences of the Ancients' (ʿulūm al-awāʾil) and Other Types of Doctrinal Dissent*

The most dramatic case of persecution recorded in the annals of the Ayyūbid period is that of Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā b. Ḥabash al-Suhrawardī, known as *al-faylasūf al-maqtūl* (the slain philosopher). Al-Suhrawardī was described by some of his contemporaries as a wonder-working saint (*walī ṣāḥib karāmāt*), and presented by others as a heretic or infidel of the worst kind (*zindīq, mulḥid, kāfir*).[35] He was executed in Aleppo in 587/1191, at the age of 38. In modern scholarship he is regarded as one of the most interesting and original thinkers of his time, a Ṣūfī who interpreted his mystical experiences in philosophical and metaphysical terms, and developed a theosophical system that integrated neo-Platonic concepts.[36] He was author of some fifty philosophical and mystical works, a contribution to Islamic thought a beyond the scope of this book.[37] Al-Suhrawardī was also a protégé of Aleppo's young ruler al-Malik al-Ẓāhir. He engaged in many debates with the *ʿulamāʾ* of Aleppo, and—being well versed in the traditional sciences—often degraded them in public.

Al-Suharawardī's unusual story, and the polar reactions he provoked among his contemporaries, gave rise to different interpretations of his figure and fate. Some modern scholars regard the political threat posed by al-Suhrawardī—a threat stemming either from his alleged (or real) affiliation with the Ismāʿīliyya,[38] or from his alleged (or real) pretension to be a prophet, or at least a divinely illuminated philosopher—as the key issue.[39] Others stress Saladin's need to appease the powerful

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[35] *Zindīq* originally meant Manichaean, but came to be used as a general term for 'heretic' or 'infidel' (Berkey, *The Formation*, 156). On terms designating heresy, see Kraemer, "Heresy,"167; Lewis, "Some Observations," 52–57; Pouzet, *Damas*, 256–257.

[36] Walbridge disagrees with this definition, claiming that Suhrawardī, "despite his own efforts to mystify his project was a hard-headed philosophical critic and creative thinker who set up the agenda for later Islamic philosophy" (Walbridge, "Suhrawardī," 201).

[37] His best known book is *Kitāb Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (*Philosophy of Illumination*). For a short exposition of his main works and thought, see Ziai, "al-Suhrawardī."

[38] Berkey, *The Formation*, 234–35; Corbin, *Islam Iranien*, 12–17; Walbridge, "Suhrawardī," 203. On the strength of the Ismāʿīlīs in the region see Marcotte, "Suhrawardī," 403–404.

[39] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ* as translated in Thackston, *Three*, 2; Ziai, "Source and Nature," 336–344; Ahmad, "Some Notes," 80. He is said to have called himself "the supporter of royalty (*al-muʾayyid bi-l-malakūt*)" or perhaps " 'the one'

indigenous Aleppan scholarly class, which was very hostile toward the brilliant successful outsider.[40] Whatever the case, Saladin, in an atypical exposition of intolerance, ordered his son, the ruler of Aleppo al-Malik al-Ẓāhir, to execute the philosopher.

The special relationship between al-Suhrawardī and al-Ẓāhir was undoubtedly one of the reasons for Saladin's alarm,[41] and may explain the envy of the scholars, who advised that he be eliminated lest he attempt to realize his pretension to assume the role of the perfect philosopher-king, or, at least, that of the enlightened mentor of the ruler.[42] Yet none of the medieval biographers explicitly accuses al-Suhrawardī of planning to usurp power. Most of them accent his derision of the *sharīʿa* and the accepted dogma. In the interrogatory *majlis* that was convened to clarify the matter, al-Suhrawardī was accused of denying the finality of Muḥammad's prophethood; perhaps a misinterpretation of his claim that prophecy could be acquired (*maksūba*), or of his denial of the claim that God could not create a prophet after Muḥammad.[43] The epistle he had composed in the defense of the philosophers (*risāla fī iʿtiqād al-ḥukamāʾ*) succeeded neither in cleansing his reputation, nor in saving his life. In it he attempted to refute, one-by-one, the oft-repeated allegations that philosophers deny, as it were, the Creator and the prophets, resurrection, paradise and hell; presenting them as faithful, pious Muslims.[44]

Indictments such as those disclaimed in the epistle were indeed prevalent in the discourse on philosophy, as indicated in autobiographical excerpts by Saʿd Allāh b. Abī al-Fatḥ al-Ṭāʾī al-Manbijī (d. 651/1254) and ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (d. 629/1231). The two scholars confess their youthful infatuation with the 'sciences of the ancients' (*ʿulūm al-awāʾil*) from the perspective of the penitent, referring to their erstwhile

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supported by royalty (*al-muʾayyad bi-l-malakūt*)"; or declare pretentiously "I am destined to rule the world (*la budda an amluka al-dunyā*)." Al-Mardīnī, who valued al-Suhrawardī's intelligence and learning, was wary that his arrogance would cause him trouble (Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21:208–211).

[40] Marcotte, "Suhrawardī," 404, 408.

[41] Ibn Shaddād, *Sīrat al-Sulṭān*, 61; trans. in Richards, *Rare and Excellent*, 20; Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 2:304; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:427; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 207–211; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 6:268–274; al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ* in Thackston, *Three*, 1–4.

[42] Ziai, "Source and Nature," 336–344.

[43] Cahen, "Chronique," 150–151.

[44] Al-Suhrawardī, *Risāla fī Iʿtiqād al-Ḥukamāʾ*, 2:262–271.

colleagues as "corrupted" (*man afsada ḥālahu*). Al-Manbijī admits to having left religion altogether ("*kharajtu ʿan al-dīn bi-l-kuliyya*"), and having returned to Islam, "thanks to God's grace," upon his homecoming from Khurasān to his native Aleppo. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf claims that he "was saved from misguided wandering and perdition," threw away his books of philosophy and renewed his faith after having accepted Saladin's nomination as a teacher of the religious sciences in the great mosque of Damascus.[45] The connection made by those two authors between the study of the ancient sciences and the personal lack, or loss, of religious commitment is quite explicit, and seems to be the typical, though by no means exclusive, attitude of Islamic scholars of their generation. The *qāḍī* Ibn al-Zakī (d. 598/1201) banned logic and disputation (*al-manṭiq wa-l-jadal*) from being taught in Damascus, providing a personal example by destroying public volumes on those subjects from his library at al-Madrasa al-Taqawiyya.[46] But under the reign of al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam and his son al-Malik Dāwūd, *ʿulūm al-awāʾil* flourished again for a short while. Their successor, al-Malik al-Ashraf, renewed an overtly hostile attitude towards those sciences, threatening with exile scholars who teach any subject other than the traditional Islamic sciences of *tafsīr* (exegesis), *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*.[47] He seems to have been acting upon a *fatwā* of the contemporary Shāfiʿī scholar Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī, who places the responsibility for the purity of faith of the ordinary believers on the shoulders of rulers, demanding that they remove the philosophers from *madrasa*s and keep them under house arrest until they repent, or else execute them.[48] The biography of the polymath Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233) seems to indicate that those recommendations were taken seriously.

Al-Āmidī enjoyed a successful career as *mudarris* and physician in Cairo, until the *ʿulamāʾ* accused him of misguided theological views, and associated him with "the school of the Muʿtazilīs and philosophers" in a written protocol which they sent out to al-Malik al-ʿĀdil. His position

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[45] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 9:4239; Ibn Abī ʿUṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, 2:206.

[46] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq*, 53; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 32; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:33–34.

[47] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 156.

[48] Al-Shahrazūrī, *Fatāwā*, 34–35; trans. in Goldziher, "The Attitude," 205–206. Al-Shahrazūrī himself was drawn to the study of logic in his youth, but as he displayed no talent for subject, his teacher persuaded him to give it up, so as not to taint his good name, "as people attribute heresy to those who occupy themselves with logic" (Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23:143; Ibn al-Wardī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:168).

with the ruler endangered, al-Āmidī left Egypt for Ḥamāh, and later continued to Damascus. Upon al-Malik al-Ashraf's ascent to rule in Damascus in 629/1229, al-Āmidī was charged with teaching philosophy, creating theological confusion, and derision of the *sharīʿa*. His students suspected that he did not observe basic religious commandments and did not pray.[49] Two years later, he was dismissed from al-Madrasa al-ʿAzīziyya. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī compared al-Āmidī's removal from the *madrasa* to the re-conquest of Acre from the hands of the Franks, calling the first more meritorious![50]

Acting upon a similar sentiment to that expressed by al-Shahrazūrī, the Ḥanbalī *qāḍī* ʿUthmān b. Asʿad b. al-Munajjā (d. 643/1246) excluded "those with heretical doctrines (*al-munsabūna ilā al-bidʿa*)" from the beneficiaries of his endowment of bread and warm clothing for the poor who would memorize and recite the Qurʾān for him after his death.[51] It is important to note that quite a few scholars did teach *kalām* and philosophy in *madrasa*s without losing their jobs or dwellings, yet the discourse employed by most historians and biographers to describe them is overtly hostile. It involves various allegations of impious behavior, such as the consumption of wine, associating with women and with lowly and base men, as well as with non-Muslims.[52] Al-Sulamī criticizes the erudite scholars, who know the law rather than the Lord (*al-ʿulamāʾ al-ʿārifīn bi-aḥkām Allāh* as opposed to *al-ʿulamāʾ al-ʿārifīn bi-Allāh*), for slack observance. He is especially hostile towards "the many among them, [who] occupy themselves with the doctrines of the philosophers regarding prophecy and the divine." He claims that some of them had abandoned religion altogether, while others are prone to doubt, and oscillate between truth and fallacy.[53] Ibn

[49] See p. 61, above, for the 'trick' by which they claimed to have proved their allegation.
[50] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:141; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 7:253–54; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 3:293–94; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:306–307; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:364–66; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 5:35–41; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, 2:174; Sourdel, "al-Āmidī"; al-Sulamī, *Ghāyat al-Marām*, 11 (editor's introduction). For a close scrutiny of the sources and the discrepancies between them, see Brentjes, "'Orthodoxy,'" 22–33.
[51] Al-Munajjid, *Waqf al-Qāḍī*, 31–32. Note the intra-communal Ḥanbalī charity (dealt with, in some detail, in my "Fidelity").
[52] See seven examples from Damascus and Aleppo of the first decades of the thirteenth century: Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 200, 202, 216; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 3:1325; Dhahabī, *al-ʿIbar*, 3:243; Pouzet, *Damas*, 255–59.
[53] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 241–242. Al-Sulamī is considerably more sympathetic towards the ascetic of twenty years, who confesses to be tormented by doubt and heretical thoughts, especially when trying to concentrate on solitary *dhikr*, and comforts him by attributing his affliction to the delusions of the devil (*ibid.*, 338–339).

Taymiyya added the allegation of sectarianism, contrasting the commendable unity of the orthodox Sunnīs with the reprehensible disunity of philosophers.[54]

According to Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr's directives to the *muḥtasib*, those who belonged to the radical Ḥanbalī camp and proclaimed their belief in anthropomorphism, were just as blameworthy (*munkar*, in al-Sulamī's vocabulary) as their adversaries, the philosophers, and deserved similar treatment.[55] Although no one of that ultra-Sunnī camp was accused of negligence of religious obligations, they were accused of erroneous doctrines, despicable innovations (*bidaʿ*) or outright heresy. It must be said that those scholarly notions were not necessarily shared by commoners. Abū Shāma, for example, tells of an ascetic known as Yūsuf b. Ādam who had many followers in Damascus at the time of Nūr al-Dīn. The latter was informed that Yūsuf was teaching *tashbīh*, and ordered that he be humiliated by being led through the town on a donkey, announcing that such is the fate of the "innovator."[56]

Reminiscent of the polar evaluations of the religious stature of the *muwallahūn* and derwishes are the two very different perceptions of the Ḥanbalī *muḥaddith* ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī, who was, at some point, barred from holding his popular *ḥadīth* classes in the Great Umayyad Mosque, on account of his "corrupt" theological teaching of *tashbīh* and *tajsīm*. His *minbar* (namely, cathedra) in the Umayyad Mosque was smashed,[57] and he was summoned for an interrogation in front of a stormy assembly (*majlis*) of scholars, held in 595/1198 in the citadel of Damascus, in the presence of the governor Sārim al-Dīn Burghush.[58] ʿAbd al-Ghanī was ordered to clarify his teachings on the vision of God

[54] He wrote: "God...commanded togetherness and harmony, and forbade division and disagreement...the people who follow the Messenger most closely disagree among themselves less than all other groups who claim to adhere to the sunna. All those who are close to the sunna disagree among themselves less than those who are far from it...The philosophers who uphold demonstrative logic...are not a unified group...Their disagreements and divisions are far greater than those existing within any one community, such as that of the Jews and Christians. The further these philosophers are from following the messengers and revealed scriptures, the more divided and disagreed they are..." (Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 152–153).

[55] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal*, 2:149; al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā,* 258, 287; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 5:88. The Cairene scholar al-Khabūshānī even recommended the exhumation of a Ḥanbalī anthropomophist and "innovator," who happened to be buried next to the mausolaeum of al-Shāfiʿī, and to a Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī *madrasa* (see p. 162, above).

[56] Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 372.

[57] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21:463; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:22.

[58] Or, according to a different version, in *dār al-ʿadl*, in the presence of al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā (Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 16; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:20).

in Paradise (*al-jiha*),[59] his understanding of the verses describing God's mounting of, or rising from, the heavenly throne (*al-istiwāʾ*),[60] and his view of God's speech and the theological status of the Qurʾān (*al-ḥarf wa-l-ṣawt*; literally: the letter and voice).[61] At the end of that *majlis*, some of the attendants accused ʿAbd al-Ghanī of being an 'innovator' (*mubtadiʿ*); others pronounced a yet harsher verdict, defining him a heretic. Even some of the Ḥanbalī scholars turned against him, forming a coalition with their erstwhile hostile adversaries, the Ashʿarīs. Soon afterwards, ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī was exiled from Damascus, to find refuge, and many admirers, in a popular neighborhood in Cairo.[62]

It is very likely that the Shāfiʿī-Ḥanbalī coalition against ʿAbd al-Ghanī was a political rather than a purely theological alliance, uniting Shāfiʿīs and Ḥanbalī families of the old elite against the rising force of the Ḥanbalī newcomers. Such an understanding is quite explicitly advanced by Ibn al-Kathīr's chronicle, in his entry on ʿAbd al-Ghanī.[63] Ibn Rajab's analysis of the political factor is different. He assumes that if some Ḥanbalīs indeed took the Shāfiʿī side (which he finds hard to believe), they were doing so out of prudence and hypocrisy.[64] Patronage, privileges, offices and access to influential positions were at stake, most likely even more than the validity of Ashʿarī versus Ḥanbalī articles of faith. Yet, if we compare ʿAbd al-Ghanī's stand, as presented in the biographical dictionaries, to the dogma formulated by his cousin, the renowned Ḥanbalī scholar Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma, we will find that the latter is indeed closer to the Ashʿarī creed.[65] Ashʿarīs continued

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[59] See Wensick, *Muslim Creed*, 229.

[60] Qurʾān, verses, 7:54, 1:3, 13:2, 20:4, 25:59, 32:3, 52:4.

[61] Nicely and briefly explained in Cook, *The Koran*, 110–113. See also Makdisi, *Ibn Qudāma*, 46–56.

[62] In Cairo he did not enjoy peace for long either (see Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:9, 22–24; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 21:443–471). ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī went through a similar *miḥna* in the court of al-Malik al-Ashraf, but finally gained the upper hand (see Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:218–236).

[63] He describes the headstrong *muḥaddith* as "extremely popular with the people (*al-nās*)," adding that "Banū al-Zakī, and al-Dawlaʿī, and the Shāfiʿī notables of Damascus, and some of the Ḥanbalīs envied him." See also Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 169–170.

[64] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:23; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid*, 1:79.

[65] The relevant part begins with the assertion that "the belief in the attributes of God, without denial or hesitation, symbolic interpretation or anthropomorphism, is part of the Sunna (*wa-min al-sunna al-imān bi-ṣifāt Allāh*...*min ghayr radd wa-lā shakk wa-lā taʾwīl wa-lā tashbīh wa-lā tamthīl*)." See Daiber, "The Creed," 110, and in

to fight against the rising Ḥanbalī tide (if we define the conflict from a sociological perspective), or perhaps against radical Ḥanbalī ideas (from the theological perspective)—in the course of the thirteenth century.[66] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr compares the "high-ranking and well-reputed" anthropomorphists with the advocates of philosophy and the *muʿtazila*; he regards both as partisans of dangerous deviant beliefs.[67] ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī renders the advocate of anthropomorphism somewhat less severely—as an innovator, rather than a heretic, nonetheless claiming that upholders of such doctrines deserve excommunication.[68] In my understanding, the fear of strife, disunity and sectarianism fostered the unlikely alliance between the mutually hostile Ashʿarīs and the moderate Ḥanbalīs, and the marginalization of radical Ḥanbalīs and Muʿtazilīs.

8.4. *Antinomian Forms of Asceticism and Sufism*

Some ascetics and Ṣūfī groups, such as the Ḥarīriyya, the Ṣaydariyya, and the *muwallah*s—fools for God (such as the Damascenes Jalāl al-Dīn al-Darguzīnī, Yūsuf al-Qamīnī and ʿAlī al-Kurdī),[69] chose degradation and life on the margins of society as their preferred spiritual path. Al-Darguzīnī, who dwelled in the Damascene cemetery of Bāb al-Ṣaghīr, wore only a few leaves to cover his private parts. He was still and silent,

a somewhat different formulation in Maqdisī, *Ibn Qudāma*, 10–11, 42. On the disputation regarding those questions, see Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 69–70.

[66] In a long article of 1962, George Makdisi attacks the common notion that the Ashʿariyya became the leading current in the Islamic world, claiming that the Ashʿarīs had to fight for recognition even within the Shāfiʿī *madhhab* (their natural home, as it were) as late as in fourteenth century Damascus (Makdisi, "Ashʿarī," 51–80). Madelung disagrees, finding the Ashʿarīs well-established in twelfth-fourteenth century Baghdad and Damascus (Madelung, "The Spread," 110, n. 3). Pouzet's work confirms Madelung's stand, regarding thirteenth century Damascus (Pouzet, *Damas*, 90, 201–202).

[67] Ibn al-Athīr, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, *al-Mathal*, 2:148–149.

[68] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 258, 287. He categorizes anthropomorphism as reprehensible, and relegates the teaching of proper theological tenents to the category of the moral obligation to command right and forbid wrong (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahyi ʿan al-munkar*). See Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:223.

[69] See Dols, *Majnūn*, 13, 378–410. I must repeat Michael Winter's observation concerning the early Ottoman period, as it seems to apply equally to the period discussed here: "this categorization…differs from the terminology used by contemporary Muslim writers, since adherents of the antinomian derwish orders were not regarded as Ṣūfīs" (Winter, *Society and Religion*, 25).

as if personifying the radical Ṣūfī maxim "die [become dead to this world] prior to your death (*mūtū qabla an tamūtū*)." While for some of the people of Damascus he was recognized as a saint who had reached the ultimate Ṣūfī goals of absolute poverty (*faqr*) and self-annulment (*fanāʾ*), for others he was a mindless wretch.[70] ʿAlī al-Kurdī provoked similarly ambivalent reactions. Some found in his filthy clothes proof of his neglect of ablutions and prayer, while others saw them as an indication of his pious renunciation of this world. The latter believed that al-Kurdī possessed wondrous powers. The Egyptian Ṣūfī Ṣafī al-Dīn b. Abī al-Manṣūr, who met him in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus when he was a child of ten, was struck by his unusual appearance and wild behavior. At the time, ʿAlī *al-muwallah* frightened the child by throwing apples at him, but years later Ṣafī al-Dīn gave this bizarre episode a predictive meaning, as if the strange man had initiated him into the world of Sufism, to which he was to remain deeply committed until the end of his life.[71]

Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qamīnī (or al-Iqmīnī), homeless, bare headed and filthy, his overlong robe sweeping the streets, appears in the biographical dictionaries of scholars as a madman who was constantly in the state of ritual impurity (*najāsa*), neither prayed nor fasted. Property-less men of his kind were exempt from almsgiving. His biographers admit that some people, "commoners and others," believed in his extraordinary power to perceive things hidden from the regular eye, and treated him as if he were a saint.[72]

Improper and provocative clothing was undoubtedly understood as an expression of revolt against established norms and authorities, and perceived as threatening to social identities and boundaries.[73] Those concepts seem to be inherent in al-Nawawī's assertion that "un-Islamic attire impairs one's prayer," and in al-Sulamī's objection to arranging the marriage of a girl to a Muslim who does not pray regularly, or wears

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[70] See Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 21.

[71] Ibn Abī al-Manṣūr, *al-Risāla*, 14–15, 34–36, 87; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:638. Compare to the eccentric behavior of Symeon of Emesa, a typical representative of the Byzantine 'fool for Christ's sake', who threw nuts at people praying in church, and kissed school boys, thus 'marking' those who would die of plague (Syrkin, "The Behavior," 153).

[72] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:638; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23:302–303; Pouzet, *Damas*, 224; Ibn al-Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:216–17. For a more sympathetic biography see al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:348.

[73] See Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 18–19, on the coiffure, apparel and paraphernalia of antinomian derwishes.

unlawful attire.[74] Moreover, odd attire allowed a dangerous freedom of expression, which was unacceptable among 'normal' members of the community. One example is that of the above-mentioned ʿAlī al-Kurdī *al-muwallah*, who blurted out at the preacher al-Dawlaʿī that he avoided going on *ḥajj* only because of his fear that his pulpit at the great mosque of Damascus be taken away from him in his absence.[75] Another example is that of Qadīb al-Bān, who stood naked before the disciples of the Ṣūfī Shaykh Abū al-Najāʾ, and impertinently told them that their shaykh was behaving like the devil (or associating with the devil) at that very moment. As it turned out later, Abū al-Najāʾ was, at that time, in the company of the *atābeg* of Mosul (namely, associating with the ruler).[76]

The disciples of al-Ḥarīrī were known in Damascus as "*aṣḥāb al-ziyy al-munāfī li-l-sharīʿa*"—those, whose dress counters the regulations of the *sharīʿa*. Abū Shāma complains that they were even worse on the inside than on the outside, though some of them repented and returned to God. He and some other chroniclers admit that young men from the old and established families of Damascus were drawn to the Ḥarīriyya and adopted its codes of dress and behavior.[77] Al-Harīrī, who was harshly condemned and even found deserving of death by several of the leading Damascene jurisconsults, was arrested by al-Malik al-Ashraf in 628/1231. By the end of the decade, he and his disciples were banished from Damascus, as were the Ṣūfīs of the Qalandariyya.[78] In 655/1257, strange-looking derwishes reappeared in Damascus. They were dressed like their master, with open robes and high hats, beardless, but sporting big mustaches. According to al-Jawbarī they would seduce the sons of the Damascene elite to go out of the city and smoke hashish with them,[79] and then they would shave their heads and take their regular

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[74] Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 70; al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 464. See Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 18.

[75] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:638. Apparently, others thought it likely, too—see, p. 94, above.

[76] Ibn Abī al-Manṣūr, *Risāla*, 30.

[77] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:174,

[78] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 180; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:173–174; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:666; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23:224–228. See also Humphreys, *From Saladin,* 209–210; Dols, *Majnūn*, 114.

[79] According to al-Yūnīnī, the son of the first Mamlūk sultan, al-Malik al-Muʿizz, was seen in the attire of the Ṣūfīs of the Ḥarīriyya (Guo, *Early Mamlūk*, 13; Ibn al-Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 7:14). About the use of intoxicants and hallucinogens in dervish groups see Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 19.

clothes away, so as to prevent them from returning to their families and their homes. In al-Jawbarī's eyes, their asceticism was feigned, and their extraordinary powers but a trick: they were heretics, *ibāḥīs* (literally, those who permit things forbidden by the religious law; licentious men), sexually and morally corrupt, the very negation of an Islamic model of piety.[80] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī uses the same term—*ibaḥīs*, or *ikhwān ahl al-ibāḥa* (the brethren of licentuousness)—to denote those men and women who dress like ascetics (he refrains from calling them Ṣūfīs) and participate in sessions of singing and dancing accompanied by musical instruments, which they scandalously claim to be the best kind of worship (*min afḍal al-ʿibādāt*). In his description they appear as men who reject the authority of the prophets and scholars, hold heretical doctrines and perform wicked acts.[81]

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80 Al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 12–20.
81 al-Shahrazūrī, *Fatāwā*, 499–501.

CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding chapters, we have combined a textually mediated, ethnographically, oriented study of Syrian mosques of the mid-twelfth to mid-thirteenth centuries, and of the popular assemblies that convened in urban public spaces, in cemeteries, at funerals and pilgrimages, with a more theologically oriented examination of some of the texts produced at that time and place. The resulting observations on the beliefs and practices of medieval Muslims are summarized and presented in the following pages, with some general remarks at the end.

First: there were hundreds of mosques and chapels in large cities, while smaller towns, and even villages, boasted of at least one congregational mosque. Zangid and Ayyūbid rulers displayed their personal piety, their concern for the religious life of their subjects, and—under circumstances distinctive to the crusading period—their contribution to the re-Islamization of the Syrian landscape—through the construction of new mosques and the restoration and embellishment of older ones. Ordinary Muslims also donated money and time for such building projects.

Mosque-going, so it seems, was a routine feature of life. Among the public that came to pray were artisans, villagers, soldiers, women and children, along with members of the religious, administrative and ruling elites. Scrupulous attendance at all daily prayers held in the mosque, regardless of health, old-age, weather or political situation; the performance of long supererogatory prayers and painstaking concern for the preservation of the sanctity (*ḥurma*) of the mosque, were hallmarks of the especially pious. So was the custom of spending the day in the mosque, especially on Fridays.

Pious men spent much of their time in the mosque every day. Even rural and small urban mosques provided sessions of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* recitation, a place for contemplation, a favorable atmosphere for begging for alms, and a refuge for wandering Ṣūfīs, ascetics and itinerant preachers. Congregational mosques in large cities, such as Damascus and Aleppo, offered libraries, and an array of occasions for edification and religious indoctrination. The Qur'ān was recited in those mosques before and after prayers, either by specialists (*muqri'ūn*), or by ordinary members of the community. The participants in some sessions of

recitation, obviously intended for men or children of the lower classes, were rewarded with a small pension. Notwithstanding, all reciters and attendants at the recitation received, in accordance with deeply rooted beliefs, the *baraka* inherent in the vocalization of the words of the Qurʾān, and in listening to it being read. Recitation was also done in the private sphere, of course, in the presence of children, in army units and in encampments, by individuals seeking the protection accorded by some specific verses.

On the precincts of the mosque, one could also study Qurʾān in more specialized study-circles, attend popular *ḥadīth* classes, or lessons of jurisprudence, grammar, history, theology, logic and *belle-lettres* (*adab*) suitable for advanced students. One could also approach a scholar and ask for a *fatwā*, join a Ṣūfī session of *dhikr*, or resign to a secluded alcove or minaret. Although Ṣūfī ecstatic dance and music were not welcome everywhere, the regular presence of Ṣūfī individuals and Ṣūfī circles in mosques indicate that Sufism indeed became an integral part of society and religion in the Ayyūbid period, and that its rituals affected the religious life of society at large. The sources convey the general impression that the men who held formal roles in the mosque—preachers, prayer leaders, reciters of Qurʾān—had the proper religious training demanded by their vocation, and upheld strong ties with the congregations they served. Biographers and chroniclers present some of the preachers and prayer leaders they mention in their works as explicit models of piety, deemed worthy of emulation by the devout.

The mosque was sometimes, however, an arena of conflict between the public and the *ʿulamāʾ*. The liturgical calendar was one issue of contention. Despite the fierce opposition of scholars, amongst them prayer leaders and preachers, crowds filled the mosques on the first Friday night of the month of Rajab, for prayers known as *al-raghāʾib*, and on the afternoon of the day of the *wuqūf* ('standing') of the pilgrims at ʿArafāt, for a ritual known as *al-taʿrīf*. They burned candles and oil lamps all night long, and held long ceremonious prayers. Another annual assembly, albeit less controversial, was held on the night of *Niṣf Shaʿbān*. On that occasion, the virtuoso devout would complete the dazzling number of a hundred successive *rakʿa*s. Other feats of piety typical for the occasion were the completion of a reading of the entire Qurʾān (while the 'normal' recommended pace was one full reading (*khatma*) every seven days, or, at the very least—one *khatma* in forty days). Yet, many scholars defined the timing of those special prayers and the customs associated

with them as *bidaʿ*, writing fiery pamphlets and preaching scathing sermons to combat them. Occasionally, they managed to co-opt rulers, who issued bans against the gatherings. The public, however, had the upper hand. Commoners, who to the dismay of scholars regarded special prayers as more meritorious than regular daily ones, made *Niṣf Shaʿbān, ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* and *al-taʿrīf* part of the liturgical calendar in the very bastion of official religion—the congregational mosque.

As stated in the introduction to this work, it is hard to determine whether neighborhood mosques were home to cohesive congregations, united by common *madhhab*, ethnic or geographical origins, or theological inclination, and bound together by ties of social solidarity. Clearly, Ḥanbalīs formed such congregations and maintained their own mosques, constructed by the funds and labor of community members, and staffed with their own men. Likewise, men of the budding Ṣūfī fraternities, and of some marginal groups, seemed to have shared a communal spirit and organization, and used to pray together. Yet, it is impossible to say whether the public that assembled for communal prayers in neighborhood mosques typically formed a congregation for purposes other than the performance of the prescribed prayers, and if they assumed collective responsibility for the management of the mosque's affairs. The sources seem to indicate that, in general, the formally appointed supervisor of the endowment that supported the mosque, rather than a voluntarily organized body of regular worshippers, was in charge of the edifice and its staff. Altogether, my impression is, that the significant focuses of solidarity and identification in the medieval Muslim society we are dealing with were the family, the *umma* and the *sharīʿa*.

In the absence of elaborate communal organization, mass assemblies may have been especially meaningful in the religious and social life of the individual believer. Hence, *majālis al-waʿẓ* drew members of all social groups and affiliations. The assemblies usually commenced with a session of Qurʾān recitation and the praise of God. This first part was followed by exhortation to repentance and personal piety, tales about martyrs and exemplary ascetics, reading of poetry, *ḥadīth*, and some devotional treatises, encouragement to *jihād* fighters, an occasional prayer for the sultan and his army, or an update on current news. Sometimes, the preacher would answer questions about belief and practice, but strictly theological issues seem to have been addressed only on rare occasions, perhaps because preachers were reluctant to disturb the spirit of unity and religiosity they aspired to by raising contested and

difficult subjects. In any case, preachers were more interested in stirring hearts and bringing tears of remorse and elation to the eyes of their listeners. Perhaps they also sought to provide good entertainment, and were less intent on intellectual stimulation. Successful preaching, in the discourse of our texts, resulted in ecstatic audiences, public gestures of repentance such as weeping and crying out loud, and most dramatic of all—in men performing the symbolic cutting of the *nāṣiya*—the lock of the forehead.

Most of the *wuʿʿāẓ* that appear in our sources were members of the scholarly class, if not part of the religious establishment. The most prominent preachers enjoyed the patronage of local rulers, and had no reason to hide such connections, not even the fact that they sometimes complied with specific requests of their rulers regarding the choice of subjects. On the contrary, sultanic patronage seems to have enhanced their popularity among their peers and with the masses, and to have secured them the recognition given to professors at *madrasa*s and mosques (which some of them were). Naturally, they rarely criticized either the ruling authorities or *ʿulamāʾ* of the religious establishment. The *iḥyāʾ al-sunna* (revivification of Sunnī Islam) movement was well served by those *wuʿʿāẓ*: they cultivated religious revival, Sunnī solidarity, anti-*bidaʿ* discourse and a spirit of militancy against enemies from without. Consequently, contemporaneous chronicles and biographers esteemed *wuʿʿāẓ*, comparing their propaganda to the *jihād* carried out on the battlefields.[1]

In the arena of the cemetery, ultimate expressions of faith in God, resignation to His decrees and adherence to the *sharīʿa* were manifested along with expositions of unrestrained grief, social strife and deviation from the demands of the religious law. At funerals, women performed the contested *niyāḥa* (lamentation), tearing their cloths, disheveling their hair, and yelling in shrill voices, perhaps to serve as mouthpieces for the sorrow and rage that men could not allow themselves to express. The belief that the living could benefit the dead through the correct performance of all funerary rites, by securing a large audience for the prayer by the bier (*ṣalāt al-janāʾiz*), and by providing proper shrouds and inscribing the most fitting Qurʾānic verses on their tombstones—was widespread. So was the custom of the visitation of graves for special prayers, and the recitation of Qurʾān with the intention of assigning to

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[1] See p. 127, above.

the dead the heavenly recompense (*thawāb*) due for those good works. At the same time, the living expected the dead to mediate and intercede for them, and to confer upon them some of the *baraka* (blessing) they had acquired thanks to their greater proximity to God.

The *shafāʿa* (intercession) and *baraka* of men of saintly reputation was especially sought after. The cult of holy shrines and relics seems to have become an integral part of Syrian Islam in the period studied here, and *mashhad*s drew visitors of all social classes and backgrounds in religious education. They came for a wide range of purposes: to pray, light candles, make or pay vows, seek cures and remedies, go through a spiritual uplifting or a mystical experience, receive inspiration, eat and feast with family members and friends. The hardship of travel was not a significant element; usually local sites, rather than distant ones, were chosen as destinations of *ziyāra*s. The timing of visitation was, almost in all cases, private and individual—mass celebrations of *mawlid*s ('birthdays' of prophets and saints) were rare in Syria before the Mamlūk period.

Numerous new or renewed sanctuaries appeared in Syria in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth century; some sites were adopted or appropriated from the Christian and Jewish map of holy places, some were rediscovered tombs and relics of old, while others were recent tombs. There were shrines on graves of Qurʾānic and anonymous prophets, *ṣaḥāba*, *ahl al-bayt*, martyrs of the initial conquests of Syria by the Muslims (*al-futūḥ*), and martyrs of the *jihād* against the Crusaders, as well as graves of early and late saintly men, scholars, pious rulers, and even Jewish sages. Shrines were also erected for the purpose of commemorating the deeds, and safeguarding the relics, of saintly figures. Narratives that tie venerated Islamic figures to *specific* geographical locations, some of them attributed to visionary dreams, were propagated. Dreams of women, regarding the identification of a sacred place were taken as seriously as those of men in similar contexts.[2] Strikingly, many of the new or renovated sites emerged in provincial towns and rural areas, spreading, as it were, the centuries-old Islamic sanctity of al-Shām from its grand traditional loci (Jerusalem, Damascus, Hebron, and a number of other sites) into more peripheral locations.

Shrines were considered worthy causes for pious endowments, and were funded by men and women of the ruling class and military elite, as

[2] See p. 190, above.

well as by commoners. *Waqf*s were established for the restorations and enlargement of sites, as well as for the salaries of keepers, the supply of water and oil, and the distribution of food, rosewater or sweetmeats to pilgrims. Ordinary pious men and women devoted time and labor to voluntary work on the premises of such sites. Moreover, ordinary pious men and women often founded new holy sites, which became, for some, a permanent dwelling and retreat from the world. The visitation of sanctuaries seems to have been practiced by all social classes, incorporating Muslims of relatively marginal groups alongside members of the military elite and even *ʿulamāʾ*.

All in all, it is safe to say that for the pious, learned and unlearned, men and women studied here, the veneration of the Qurʾān, and the fulfilment of the *sharīʿa* were never distinct from the veneration of charismatic shaykhs and sacred objects. Book and law, shaykhs and relics were intertwined in a variety of hybrid forms, and were interpreted and experienced in different ways. Members of all classes partook, to some degree or other, in the rituals that were held both at official religious institutions (first and foremost, the mosque), and at holy shrines and sites of pilgrimage. The interaction between the various social groups allowed a constant 'multi-directional flow of culture' (see introduction), which seems to have been intensive enough to make the beliefs and practices shared by members of all echelons of society more substantial than those that divided them.

We have seen that scholars made 'elite' materials and texts available to the masses by 'channeling' them into popular devotional literature and oral presentations at official sermons, funerary orations, assemblies of exhortation and public lectures.[3] Al-Nawawī's *Kitāb al-Adhkār* (a collection of texts for personal prayer) and al-Sulamī's *Maqāṣid al-Ṣalāt* (*The Purports of Prayer*—see p. 136 above) are fine examples of works consciously written for a wide audience. Al-Nawawī notes, in the preface to his collection, that he had omitted almost all *isnād*s (chains of transmission), explained everything clearly, and added the epithet *al-ṣaḥābī* to the names of Companions who may not have been known outside scholarly circles. All that, he explicitly says: "so that commoners and students may easily understand (*bi-ḥaythu yasʾhulu*

[3] This paragraph is strongly inspired by O'Connor, "Popular and Talismanic," 168.

fihmuhu ʿalā al-ʿawāmm wa-l-mutafaqqihīn)."[4] In the same book, he advises the scholar who endeavors to admonish or teach 'a group of men' (obviously of the non-learned) to take good care not to make religious knowledge and exhortation hateful, boring and alienating.[5] Many other authors who composed sophisticated scholarly tracts also wrote very accessible texts, obviously intended for lay audiences. *Samāʿāt* (lists of attendants at the public reading of a text), which record the participation of women and of 'ordinary' men of lower social status in classes that were conducted in mosques and *madrasa*s, in shops and in orchards, and at the homes of students and teachers, indicate that commoners were receptive to such materials.

ʿUlamāʾ, whether formally appointed to religious posts, or commanding informal spiritual authority, typically vied for popularity among wide echelons of society, rather than seeking the elevated detachment of the ivory tower. The patronage of sultans and the recognition of fellow scholars did not seem to suffice even for renowned learned men such as the Ṣanafī preacher and historian Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, the Shāfiʿī *muftī* and *khaṭīb* Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Sulamī, and the Ḥanbalī jurist Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma. Strikingly, all three of them—to take just a few representative cases—missed no opportunity to reach out to wide and varied audiences. Biographers indulge in descriptions of the admiration and love that ordinary people bestowed on such *ʿulamāʾ*. They do not fail to mention the attendance of the *ʿāmma* (commoners), side by side with the *khāṣṣa* (elite) at their addresses, conveying the impression that the presence of men of plebeian classes was worthy of notice, and that their appreciation added to the prestige of an *ʿālim*. A nice example may be found in the following quotation of Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd. Speaking about his master, ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Sulamī, he says that when al-Sulamī's decision to leave Egypt became known, a mixed crowd of men, women and children, scholars, merchants and workers (*muḥtarifūn*) would not let him go—"as if he was a prophet leaving his believers"![6] Al-Sulamī himself justifies special attire for *ʿulamāʾ*, notwithstanding its wastefulness and detrimental effect on their humility, by their need to be recognized by commoners. He adds a personal anecdote, recollecting how during the *ḥajj*, when he was dressed in the clothes of the ritually pure

[4] Al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 35–37.
[5] Al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 448–449.
[6] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥall al-Rumūz*, 91.

pilgrim (*muḥrim*) like everyone else, people disregarded his corrections of their practice. He was heeded only once he donned the typical attire of scholars.[7] The descriptions of crowds at funerals of scholars—their size and their extravagant expressions of sorrow—display the same tendency, and show how important it was for scholars to be venerated and appreciated by the masses. Rulers showed similar concern for popularity with the lower classes through the venue of devotion to Islam: aside from their patronage of the institutions and persons of the religious elite, they also established institutions serving the society at large. Mosques, Qurʾānic schools (*kuttāb*), shrines and public assemblies of exhortation and recitation were some of the causes they endowed.

In conclusion, I find that, contrary to Michael Chamberlain, unlike many military elites, the Ayyūbid rulers, and Nūr al-Dīn Zangī who preceded them, were deeply engaged and even influential in the sphere of religious life. Along with their contribution to the strengthening of the Sunna in Syria and the Jazīra, and through their patronage of Sunnī scholars and institutions, they took an active part in what scholars labeled as "the termination of unwarranted innovations (*imātat al-bidaʿ*)". They cooperated with *ʿulamāʾ* in the marginalization, delegitimization and punishment of dissenters of sorts—those who did not accept the hegemony of mainstream *ʿulamāʾ* and the total authority of the *sharīʿa* as interpreted by them. Radical ascetics and Ṣūfīs, accused of any of the following charges—derision of basic religious obligations, the consumption of wine, improper clothing, immodest sexual conduct, immoral behavior, or the employment of supernatural powers attributed to Satan or the *jinn*—were included in this category. So were *ʿulamāʾ* who held extreme Ḥanbalī or Muʿtazilī doctrines regarding the theological issue of the attributes of God. Impiety and religious dissent of the worst kind were attributed to men who claimed prophecy (on the lower end of social hierarchies) and to scholars who studied and taught philosophy and the 'sciences of the ancients' (on the upper end). Practitioners of occult sciences were incorporated into this group as well. Marginalized and defamed in the discourse of their mainstream peers, they were, in some cases, also persecuted and repressed by rulers.

The men of religion who enjoyed the greatest moral authority over the ordinary townsfolk, and were most influential in shaping popular models of piety, must have been *ʿulamāʾ* and shaykhs of relatively

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[7] Al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 408–409. See also *ibid.*, 196–197, 223–225.

humble standing: the unlettered shaykhs of Mt. Nāblus, the *imām*s of village mosques, the lesser itinerant *wuʿʿāẓ*. Those figures—in a paraphrase of Berkey's eloquent assessment of the role of 'popular Ṣūfīs' in Mamlūk society—were not held in considerable esteem as paradigms of resistance to dominant Islamic authorities, nor did they pose a challenge to the authority of the more institutional *ʿulamāʾ*. On the contrary, as is demonstrated by the case of the Ḥanbalī shaykh of Mt. Qāsyūn in the early seventh/thirteenth century, ʿImād al-Dīn al-Maqdisī. Ordinary people (*al-nās*) looked up to him precisely *because* he was taken as a role-model of a pious Muslim, living humbly according to the prescriptions of the *sharīʿa*; teaching Qurʾān, correcting their manner of prayer, admonishing them for their sins, and praying to God for their remission.[8] By contrast, as Karamustafa has shown, the antinomian rough Ṣūfīs of the Ḥarīriyya or Qalandariyya, the 'fools for God' and the *malāmatī* 'blame-seekers'[9] drew at least some of their followers from elite classes.[10]

Evidently, the heightened religious tension of the era of the Christian crusades and Islamic counter-crusade in the Middle East created not only social solidarity and conformity, but also quests for alternative, if not rebellious religious venues among the learned, and a need for a stronger sense of belonging among segments of society with little or no access to learning. Those currents were, however, successfully marginalized by the upholders of mainstream modes of religious life: those based on high-regard for the demands of the *sharīʿa* and the authority of Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* as interpreted by *ʿulamāʾ*. Such mainstream modes accommodated Ṣūfī-like asceticism and saint worship on the one hand, and Ḥanbalī rigorism and activism on the other. The result was an outlook successfully disseminated in all echelons of society thanks to its highly inclusive character, and to the efficient activity of its agents in the central arenas of the mosque, the cemetery, the shrine, and the public assembly of exhortation.

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[8] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:48–50.

[9] The latter two categories are drawn from the typology of Geoffroy, as summarized in Homerin, "Study of Islam," 19–20.

[10] Berkey, "Popular Culture," 143; Massignon, "Ḥarīriyya."

APPENDIX I: THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR

The following is a preliminary list of rituals that were performed in Ayyūbid Syria: prescriptive rituals (such as the five pillars of Islam), vigils, rites of passage, protective rituals, and rituals designed to promote social cohesion.[1] The material is organized along the yearly calendar and the life-cycle. It is based on descriptions of rituals that, according to the historical sources, actually took place in twelfth-thirteenth century Syria, minimally supplemented with prescriptive works and secondary literature. It does not claim to capture the liturgical calendar of the 'average' Muslim individual; rather, it provides an inventory of the various practical expressions of piety recorded in sources pertaining to the geographical and chronological framework of this study. In most cases, it is impossible to estimate the prevalence of these practices, or their geographical spread and relation to social class. Medieval chroniclers, biographers, geographers and travelers were more likely to record the unusual and the eccentric than the routine and trivial, and the information they provide is fragmented. Their attention is unevenly divided between the various social groups: there is very little material on life cycle rituals other than those that took place at the court. The bulk of the material pertains to Damascus and Aleppo; there is very little on rural society. The ensuing calendar is, therefore, but a sketch, which may be fleshed out in time, with additional source material.

Daily Routine

Prayers: the five daily prayers were announced by muezzins, and held in a legion of urban and rural mosques, *madrasa*s, Ṣūfī institutions, at homes and outdoors, with or without an *imām*. In some congregational mosques (probably only in big cities), at least some of the prayers were held in several congregations simultaneously, segregated according to *madhhab*.[2]

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[1] Here I have made selective use of the typology suggested by Meri, in his "Ritual and the Qur'ān," 485–87.

[2] See discussion on pp. 45–47, above.

Qur'ān recitation: the Qur'ān—long and short portions of it[3]—was recited every day, and in some places also during the night, in the private and in the public spheres; in mosques, *madrasa*s, Ṣūfī institutions, mausolea, holy shrines and army units; at assemblies and family gatherings, as a prelude to various ceremonies, on graves and during funerals, as means of coping with crisis, on festivals and on special nights (such as *Niṣf Shaʿbān*). There were organized scheduled sessions of recitation led by professional reciters, and sessions that were held without the supervision of professionals, sometimes for a stipend paid by *waqf* endowments.

People routinely recited certain *sūra*s for specific practical purposes, such as protection from Satan and the evil eye, temptation and other dangers;[4] healing,[5] forgiveness, peaceful sleep,[6] victory and providence.[7]

Weekly Routine

Prayers: Some individuals would habitually perform *duʿā'* (supererogatory prayers, supplications) on a certain day of the week, at a certain place.[8]

Mondays and Thursdays were days of special devotions, such as fasts,[9] visits to cemeteries and shrines,[10] and the reading of *ḥadīth*.[11] People spent more time in the mosque in the evenings of Monday and Thursday.[12]

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[3] Long: *al-subʿ*—the seven long *sūra*s from *al-baqara* (2) to *al-tawba* (9); medium: a *juz'* (the thirtieth part of the Qur'ān), short: *al-kawthariyya*—the last seven *sūra*s of the Qur'ān, beginning with *al-kawthar* (108); very short: *al-ikhlāṣ* (112).

[4] *Āyāt al-ḥaras* (see p. 97, above) were considered efficient in those circumstances (Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:55).

[5] Abū ʿUmar recommended *sūra* 116 (*li-īlāf Quraysh*) before meals.

[6] *Sūra*s 36 (*yāsīn*) 56 (*al-wāqiʿa*), 32 (*al-sajāda*) and 25 or 67 (*al-furqān* or *al-mulk*) were said at bedtime (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 9:4181).

[7] See more in O'Connor, "Popular and Talismanic," 172–173, 176.

[8] Shaykh ʿImād al-Dīn al-Maqdisī used to do so on Wednesday afternoons, in the cemetery of al-Shuhadā' in Damascus (Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:10).

[9] Not only in Ṣūfī and ascetic circles. Al-Malik al-ʿĀdil (described by the biographer ʿAbd al-Laṭīf as a compulsory eater) used to abstain from food every Thursday (Cahen, "ʿAbdallaṭīf" 111).

[10] On Thursdays, visitors, who used to light candles and lamps in the grotto known as Maghārat al-Damm (the site of Abel's murder) on Mt. Qāsyūn (Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 274–75). On the afternoons of Mondays and Thursdays, Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya in Damascus would welcome visitors who wished to touch the sandal of the prophet (al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:46; Ibn Rushayd al-Fihri, as quoted by al-Maqqarī, in al-Munajjid, *Madīnat Dimashq*, 198–199).

[11] In the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, on Thursday nights (see p. 70, above).

[12] Nūr al-Dīn endowed for the extra expenditure of ten Damascene mosques on

On Fridays, sessions for the recitation of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* were held immediately after the *khuṭba* and the congregational prayer and throughout the day, in large and small mosques, in Ṣūfī institutions (where the study of Ṣūfī texts often followed the recitation) and in mausolea. Special prayers were held in some of those institutions on behalf of their founders. The very devout would spend the whole day at the mosque, and give alms.[13] Others used to visit the graves of their relatives, and frequent holy places.[14] In some shrines, food or sweets were distributed to visitors.[15]

Saturdays seem to have been preferred days for assemblies of exhortation (*majālis al-waʿẓ*).[16]

Annual Rituals

Awwal Muḥarram (the first day of the Muslim calendar) was marked, in some circles, by a vigil (*iḥyā' al-layl*) for prayer and Qur'ān recitation, or by special supplications (*duʿā'*).[17] Abū ʿUmar used to say and teach the following special prayer: "O God, You are the First, the Ancient, and this is a new year. I ask for your protection from Satan and his friends, and help against temptation. May I occupy myself only with what brings me closer to you, O God. May Satan say: we have given up on his soul, he trusts God, and two angels protect him."[18]

Rabīʿ al-Awwal was the month of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid al-Nabī*). Nūr al-Dīn was most likely the first Sunnī ruler to celebrate the night of the *mawlid*. In Aleppo and in Mosul laudatory poems in honor

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special occasions (*al-awqāt al-sharīfa*): the holidays, the nights of Ramaḍān, Fridays and the nights of Fridays, Mondays and Thursdays (Abū Shāma, *al-Rawḍatayn*, 1998, 1:41. This part is omitted from the 1991 edition).

[13] Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 98b, 99a; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 150–151; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 7:53; Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Aḥwāl*, 122a; al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 30–31. Nūr al-Dīn used to distribute 100 *dīnār*s among the *fuqarā'* of Damascus every Friday (Lev, *Charity*, 48).

[14] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 71, 152; Pahlitzsch, "Transformation," 61–62; *idem*, "Concern," 340.

[15] In Mashhad Ḥusayn, for example (Ibn Shaddād, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:154–5, and see p. 193, above). See Lev, *Charity*, 130–134, on the distribution of food in medieval cities.

[16] See pp. 128–29.

[17] In the Madrasa al-Ashrafiyya in Damascus this was one of five nights 'enlivened' with nocturnal prayers, the lighting of candles and oil lamps, and a full reading of the Qur'ān (Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 23:141; Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 238–39).

[18] Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 74.

of the patron of the celebration were recited, fires were lit, there was a banquet for guests, presents were distributed in the court and in *madrasa*s.[19] In Irbil, in the early thirteenth century, the festival was celebrated alternately, one year on the eighth of Rabīʿ al-Awwal, the next on the twelfth (due to a difference of opinions regarding the right date). The celebration drew crowds, even from distant locations. During the night of the *mawlid*, a procession with lit candles made its way to the local *khānqāh*; it was followed by a sermon, a lavish banquet for the poor and a separate banquet for the invited guests of the ruler. *Samāʿ* was performed in public throughout the whole night.[20]

Rajab—The whole month, like the months of Shaʿbān and Ramaḍān, enjoyed a halo of sanctity:[21] sermons were held,[22] weddings took place,[23] some people would fast.[24]

The first Friday night of Rajab was marked by a fast and vigil, extravagant illumination up of mosques and some *madrasa*s, Qurʾān recitation, and long controversial prayers known as *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib*. Some people made special endowments for oil to be used on that night, and for the salaries of Qurʾān reciters.[25]

Shaʿbān—The night of mid Shaʿbān (*Niṣf Shaʿbān*) was considered a blessed night, even identified as *Laylat al-Qadar* ('the night of the decree'). Special prayers were held from sunset till dawn, and the very devout used to perform a hundred *rakʿā*s in the course of those prayers.[26] It was an occasion for the distribution of food and clothing for the poor,[27] and sweets and presents to students of *madrasa*s, and for ceremonial events, such as the inauguration of *madrasa*s.[28]

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[19] Kaptein, *Muḥammad's Birthday*, 31–34. See Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:671; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*; 4:113–121.

[20] The ruler was Muẓaffar al-Dīn Kökbürī (d. 630/1232); see Kaptein, *Muḥammad's Birthday*, 41. Abū Shāma presents the *mawlid* as a most praiseworthy *bidʿa*. It became controversial in the fourteenth century (*idem*, 71, 51).

[21] On Rajab's pre-Islamic holiness, and the Prophet's attitude toward its continuation see Kister, "Rajab", 373–375; al-Ṭurṭūshī, *al-Bidaʿ*, 123–131; and ʿAwda, *Risālāt al-Adab*, 128–145.

[22] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:662; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:58.

[23] We know of royal weddings (Cahen, "ʿAbdallaṭīf," 110).

[24] See Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Fatāwā*, 21; Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:166.

[25] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 238.

[26] Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Aḥwāl*, 121a.

[27] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 6:2911; al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 93–94; Ibn Shaddad, *al-Aʿlāq*, 1:110.

[28] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:677. On Shaʿbān in earlier, non-Arab traditions, see Wensinck, "Shaʿbān."

According to al-Maqdisī (tenth century), a festival was held on that date at Mt. Ṣiddīqa, at the tomb of Ṣiddīq, the son of the prophet Ṣāliḥ, with pilgrims from the vicinity (Tyre, Banyas, Sidon, and Qadas), and a representative of the sultan.[29]

Ramaḍan—The muezzin would awaken the believers for the last meal before daybreak (*saḥūr*) with verses of poetry.[30] The fast seems to have been generally observed, even by those who were not meticulous in performing daily prayers.[31] Some people spent the whole month in retreat,[32] while rulers exhibited their generosity by hosting *ʿulamāʾ* for the meal at the end of the day, and by sending out sweets to mosques, Ṣūfī establishments and villages.[33] Wealthy citizens hosted the poor,[34] and communal dinners were held in *madrasa*s.[35]

Ṣalāt al-tarāwīḥ was performed during the nights of Ramaḍān. The prayer was composed of twenty *rakʿā*s (according to al-Nawawī). Supplications, and the recitation of certain Qurʾānic verses were added.[36] The completion of a full reading of the Qurʾān during the month was a prevalent custom.[37]

On *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr*, communal prayers were held in the *muṣallā*.[38] A vigil with prayer and *dhikr* was considered desirable.[39] Many visited

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[29] Al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan*, 188; trans. in Wheatley, *The Places*, 415, n. 415. I found no later evidence.

[30] Tabbaa, *Constructions*, 177, n. 35.

[31] See al-Sulamī's passing remark, that people regard eating in Ramaḍān as a far more severe transgression than skipping the prescribed prayers (al-Sulamī, *Fatawā*, 339).

[32] Abū Isḥāq b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 644/1246), the personal physician of two Ayyūbid rulers, used to do so, refraining also from speech during Ramaḍān (Ibn Abū ʿUṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, 2:192). Jamāl al-Dīn of Aleppo spent his *iʿtikāf* on Ramaḍān copying the Qurʾān (Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 4:34).

[33] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt*, 7:91; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:222; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:148; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:714.

[34] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:747.

[35] Fāṭima b. Muḥammad al-Samarqandī, the wife of the Ḥanafī scholar al-Kāsānī, sponsored such dinners for the residents of al-Madrasa al-Ḥallāwiyya in Aleppo (Eddé, *Alep*, 373).

[36] Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 257–261; al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 424; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*; 2:764; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:61. For details on this selection of verses see Gardet, "Duʿāʾ," and Rippin, "Sadjda."

[37] Al-Nawawī recommends the explanation of each recited section, and warns against two customs: 'stretching' the reading beyond one *juzʿ*, and reading *sūrat al-anʿām* in its entirety on the seventh night of Ramaḍān, as practiced by ignorant *imāms*, who mistakenly believe that it was revealed as a whole (al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 277).

[38] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:263.

[39] Al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 260. It was performed at least in one *madrasa* in Damascus (see above).

cemeteries, where women spent hours in the shade of provisional tents. Women also conducted their own prayer sessions.[40] Rulers invited *ʿulamāʾ* to the citadel, and distributed presents to members of the military and administrative elite.[41] The emirs (in Egypt, at least) walked in procession before the sultan, kissing the earth in front of him.[42] There was merry-making by beating drums, singing, dancing and reciting poetry, contested by some scholars and approved by others, and games for the soldiers.[43]

Dhū al-Ḥijja—Men and women of all social classes performed the *ḥajj*—preferably more than once.[44] People went out in the company of elderly parents.[45] The sending of a messenger to perform the pilgrimage in the place of his dispatcher seems to have been an acceptable practice as well.[46] An *amīr al-ḥajj* (leader of the pilgrimage caravan) was nominated in Damascus every year, and the Syrian caravan left for Mecca regularly. Some years, however, it failed to reach its destination, usually as a result of war, banditry, or extreme weather conditions. It also happened that the pilgrims made it to Mecca, but could not complete the rites.[47] Some people made the *ḥajj* after having experienced

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[40] Ibn al-Athīr, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, *al-Mathal*, 2:154; al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 38.

[41] Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubda*, 3:205; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:227.

[42] Al-Sulamī, *Ḥall al-Rumūz*, 89.

[43] Al-Sulamī, who discusses the issue at some length, approves of all those customs if performed on the days of the two festivals, as well as on weddings, homecoming banquets (*qudūm al-ghāʾib*) and the *ʿaqīqa* ritual (see below)—if intended to evoke joy and pleasure, and not to stir up carnal desires and passion for this world (al-Sulamī, *Ḥall al-Rumūz*, 66–68).

[44] Four hundred autograph *ḥajj* or *ʿumra* certificates that recorded their itinerary in detail, sometimes with colorful schematic illustrations (dating 476/1108–711/1311) were found in the Umayyad Mosque. See Sourdel-Thomine et Sourdel, "Une collection"; idem, "A propos des documents"; and Aksoy and Milstein, "A Collection," who point out that an especially large portion of those especially well-executed and beautifully illustrated documents date to the early Ayyūbid period (*ibid*., 102). See also narrative sources: Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:922; 10:4418; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:405; Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 92b, 94a; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 134; and al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 232. Abū Shāma's father went on *ḥajj* four times (Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 168); Yāsīn b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Muqrī (d. 687/1288)—twenty times throughout his long life (Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1988, 13:312); Āmina bint Muḥammad, a granddaughter of a *qāḍī*, mother of another, and a patron of a *ribāṭ* in Damascus, performed the *ḥajj* three times, once in the company of her sister (Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 50:180).

[45] Shaykh Ismāʿīl b. Abī al-Ḥasan accompanied his parents, and took care of them on the journey (Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:405).

[46] See Sourdel-Thomine and Sourdel, "Une collection"; Aksoy and Milstein, "A Collection," 103; and al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 289, 518 (dealing with the employment and wages of a messenger, and with the performance of *ḥajj* for one's parents).

[47] The *ḥajj* of 557/1162, for example, ended before all pilgrims had completed the rituals, because of a violent conflict between the emir of Mecca and the *amīr*

or undertaken *tawba* (repentance), resigning from active in in the life of this world in order to devote themselves to divine worship.[48] Some combined the *ḥajj* with a visit to Medina and Jerusalem, or to Jerusalem and Hebron.[49] Sexes were separated during most of the rituals, with only certain times and places assigned for women.[50]

The return of the caravan, at least its return to Damascus, was celebrated by an enthusiastic reception: men and women went out to welcome the pilgrims (*ḥujjāj*), expecting to draw upon themselves some of the blessings of the pilgrimage.[51] The climax of the *ḥajj*, the great assembly of pilgrims on Mt. ʿArafāt (*al-wuqūf*), was duplicated in Syrian mosques in an event known as *Layl ʿArafāt*, or *al-taʿrīf*. People used to gather, bareheaded (a symbol of humility), in mosques and in the Ḥaram of Jerusalem, and recite special prayers from the afternoon prayer of the day till sunset.[52] Ṣūfīs (at least in the Ḥaram of Jerusalem) performed *samāʿ* in honor of that night, and rulers used the occasion to manumit slaves and perform other benevolent gestures.[53]

Some people made pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the purpose of celebrating *ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā*, and making the ritual sacrifice on the Ḥaram.[54]

al-ḥajj. Ibn al-Athīr's grandmother, who was among the pilgrims that year, returned on the next year, according to a *fatwā* she had received from the renowned Shāfiʿī *muftī* Abū al-Qāsim al-Barazī (d. 560/1165), and thus completed two pilgrimages (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1966, 11:288). For the route of the Syrian caravan, see Pouzet, *Damas*, 347–48.

48 Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:735; Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-Ḥikāyāt*, 94a; trans. in Talmon-Heller, "Cited Tales," 136.

49 Pouzet, *Damas*, 348–351. For criticism of these customs, see Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, 283–284. Visitation of Hebron and Jerusalem were done on other occasions as well, especially by Ṣūfīs (see examples in al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 3:58; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 2:923, 788; 4:1620, 1627, 1648, 8:3593, 3834; 10:4304; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:229). On an eleventh-century itinerary for the visitation of Jerusalem see Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 69–71.

50 Tolmacheva, "Female Piety," 167–169.

51 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 286.

52 Al-Ṭurṭūshī describes a large assembly of townsmen and villagers, who stood in Jerusalem facing the *qibla*, raising their voices in supplication. After sunset, they dispersed in tears, expressing their sorrow for not having been in the 'real' place. He comments with sorrow, that some of the participants in those rites mistakenly thought that four such 'standings' were equal to one *ḥajj* (al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb al-Bidaʿ*, 92). See earlier description by Nāṣir-i Khusraw, and later description by Ibn Taymiyya, in Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 61.

53 Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, 8:690; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 136.

54 Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, 62. For other customs typical of *ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā* see section on *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr*, above.

Other Festivals

A week-long festival (*mawsim*) by the name of *Khamīs al-Ruzz*—'Thursday of the Rice'—was celebrated at Mashhad Rūḥīn in northern Syria in the spring, since the mid seventh/thirteenth century. The festival drew people from Aleppo, Ḥamāh, Ḥarrān, Bālis and their surroundings.[55]

On the feasts of the Assumption and the Nativity of the Virgin, Muslims—according to Burchard of Strasburg (the emissary of Frederic I to Saladin)—visited Saydanāya, a village outside Damascus, housing a famed icon of the Virgin, which Franks had also valued. They made supplications and votive offerings 'like the Christians'.[56]

Rites of the Life Cycle

Birth and infancy—The birth of an heir to the throne was celebrated in a grand manner: the city was decorated, fun and amusement were provided, food and presents were given out to soldiers, scholars and students at *madrasa*s, Ṣūfīs and commoners.[57]

The *ʿaqīqa* was a ritual performed for the newborn child. A blood sacrifice in its nature, the *ʿaqīqa* consists of shaving the head of the child, killing a sheep or a goat (no bone of which may be broken), and offering the following prayer: "Oh God, here is the *ʿaqīqa* for my son 'giving the name', its blood for his blood, its flesh for his flesh, its hair for his hair, and save my son from the fire . . .". Customarily, two goats were slaughtered (either by the father or by the *imām*) for a male child, and one for a female.[58] It was probably accompanied by merry-making, such as the beating of drums, dance and song, and the recitation of poetry.

The circumcision (*khitān*) of the son of a ruler was a festive occasion: the city was decorated, musicians played, alms and clothes were

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[55] See pp. 194–195, above.

[56] Meri, *The Cult*, 211.

[57] During the celebrations in honor of the birth of al-Malik al-ʿAzīz's son, for example, a boat took gay passengers from the citadel to the town, until an accident occurred, and the cruising was halted (Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:283). Nūr al-Dīn celebrated the birth of his son in 9 similar manner in 565/1169–70 (Lev, *Charity*, 26).

[58] For the mention of the ritual in early thirteenth century Damascus (in a scholarly family of rural origins), see Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *Aḥwāl*, 125a. About the ritual, see Zwemer, "Atonement," 190; Giladi, *Children*, 35–40; Juynboll, "ʿAḳīḳa."

distributed to orphans, and some of them were circumcised on the occasion as well.[59]

Childhood—Children of *ʿulamāʾ* were exposed to learning at a tender age. Boys and girls (at least in some families) only two or three years old were taken to the homes of scholars, especially to attend recitation of *ḥadīth*.[60] The more formal education of boys was carried on at the *maktab*—the Qurʾānic school. Boys, especially orphans and boys of poor families, would participate in daily readings of short portions of the Qurʾān in the communal mosque (some of which were supported by special endowments).[61]

Wedlock—The marriage of members of the ruling elite were lavishly celebrated. Food was prepared for a large number of honorable guests, and tables piled with sweets were set out for commoners, "according to the customs of the Turks" (*ʿalā ʿādat al-Turk*).[62]

Preparations for Death—Some people prepared their own shrouds in advance, usually if they possessed a garment or a fabric that carried, in their eyes, special blessings.[63] There were men who explicitly nominated a specific relative, scholar, or saintly man, to wash their corpse and say the *ṣalāt al-janāza* (prayer for the dead) for them. Others endowed *waqf*s that would pay for Qurʾān recitation at their grave,[64] manumitted slaves, or gave charity.[65] The recitation of the Qurʾān and the repetition of the *shahāda* by the dying, and by his relatives, were considered to be the most appropriate occupations on the deathbed.[66] *Sūrat*

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[59] See the descriptions of the *khitān* of Ismāʿīl b. Nūr al-Dīn at the age of ten, in 569/1174 (Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 4:1822–1826; Abū Shāma *al-Rowḍatayn*, 1:293), and that of Aḥmad b. al-Malik al-Ẓāhir (Cahen, "ʿAbdallaṭīf," 110). See also Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 10:208; Giladi, *Children*, 36–41; Lev, *Charity*, 43–44.

[60] See Abū Shāma's touching reports about the education of his children, most of who died at a very young age (Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 165–189).

[61] See p. 68, above.

[62] See the description of the marriage of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Dāwūd to his cousin ʿAshūra Khātūn in Lājūn, in 629/1232 (Ibn Wāṣil, *al-Mufarrij*, 5:15). See also Eddé, "Villes," 72–73.

[63] See p. 164, above.

[64] The well-to-do Damascene al-Sumaysatī, for example, enjoined that the entire Qurʾān be read over his tomb every Friday, in return for loaves of white bread for each participant (Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 289–290; trans. in Broadhust, *Travels*, 302–304). See also Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, 132.

[65] Lev, *Charity*, 25.

[66] The inscription on many epitaphs claims that the deceased "died announcing that there is no god but He, and Muḥammad is His messenger (*tuwuffiya ʿalā shahādati anna lā illāha illā Allāh wa-inna Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*)." See for example *RCEA*, 9:2628. Narrative sources tell of the 'beautiful death' that occurs during or at

yāsīn—thought to bring an escort of angels to pray and beg forgiveness for the deceased, watch over the rites of burial, and ease transition to heaven—was especially popular (at funerals as well).[67] Dying in Jerusalem was considered meritorious, and some men made a deliberate effort to reach it in time.[68]

Mourning Rites and Funerals—The news of death (or of a catastrophe) was received with the ripping of clothes, the blackening of the face, striking of the head and the disheveling or cutting of hair, the wearing of black and blue cloths, followed by verbal lamentation and loud wailing. The washing of the corpse and the shrouding seem to have been performed at home, by relatives. Funerals were lengthy affairs; the funerary procession was accompanied by Qurʾān-reciters (*muqriʾūn*), who walked slowly in front of the bier, and by wailing women. The most important part, the prayer for the dead (*ṣalāt al-janāza*), took place either at the mosque or at the home of the deceased. It was followed by supplications (*duʿāʾ*), Qurʾān recitation, and sermons, including exhortation, consolation and recitation of poetry. Sometimes, it was repeated more than once along the way to the cemetery. In the cemetery, the *talqīn* ('reminder' of basic religious tenents) was usually pronounced after burial, followed by the *takbīr* (*Allāhu akbar*) repeated four times, with certain short prayers in between each repetition.[69] It was customary to pay condolences (*taʿziya*) to the relatives of the deceased during the first three days that followed the funeral, and perhaps to visit the grave as well.[70]

At some point, a tombstone would be erected, with inscriptions of Qurʾānic verses, short prayers, poems and some personal messages, as well as the name and year of death. Monumental mausolea were erected

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the end of recitation. For example: Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Manhal*, 6:60; Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 3:1213; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:29; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 22:51.

[67] Ohtoshi, "Manners," 26.

[68] Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd Allāh b. Jamāʿa (d. 675/1276–77) of Ḥamāh parted from his family and left his hometown, saying: "I shall go to Jerusalem to die there" (Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Manhal*, 1:64). Rabīʿ al-Maridīnī embarked on a (miraculous) journey from Mecca for that purpose (Morray, *Ayyubid Notable*, 104). See also Nāṣir-i Khusraw on the cemetery of the Mt. of Olives (quoted in Livne-Kafri, "Burial," 420, with traditions concerning burial in Jerusalem).

[69] See pp. 157–58, above.

[70] Irbil's ruler Abū Saʿīd Kökbürī visited the grave of ʿAbd al-Laṭīf b. Abī Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 610/1223–14) every morning, for the three consecutive days after the shaykh's burial (Ibn al-Mustawfī, *Taʾrīkh Irbil*, 1:171).

above some of the tombs of members of the elite, or in another place, to which the remains of the deceased were moved for second burial.

Special Occasions

Drought—*Ṣalāt al-istisqāʾ* (prayer for rain) was held in raised places, outside the city.[71] According to legal prescriptive literature, the prayer should be preceded by three days of fasting and repentance, and announced by a leading religious authority. It should be conducted in the simplest clothing, with the participation of women, the elderly, the children and the beasts. *Dhimmī*s should not be prevented from joining in, but must pray separately. The raising of the arms during the prayer is recommended (contrary to all other prayers).[72] Some scholars recommend that the prayer be followed by a sermon (*khuṭba*).[73]

Solar Eclipse—*al-kusūf*, regarded as a warning sent by God (*takhwīf min Allāh*), was therefore an occasion of a special prayer (defined as *sunna* in one place, as a *nāfila*—supererogatory prayer—in another). It could be individual or communal, accompanied by (according to scholarly recommendations) *dhikr, duʿāʾ, takbīr, istighfār,* giving alms, or manumitting slaves.[74]

Times of Danger—Ceremonies for averting menace would include the public exposure of a relic (such as the ʿUthmānī codex, normally held in a special case inside the Umayyad Mosque) at a special prayer assembly, inside the mosque, or at the *muṣallā*.[75]

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[71] Damascenes (from the times of ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, according to Ibn ʿAsākir) would go up to Maghārat al-Damm on Mt. Qāsyūn (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:333–336); Aleppans held the prayer on Mt. Banqūsa (Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:312. For a short list of sites of *ṣalāt al-istisqāʾ* around the medieval Muslim world, see Diem, *The Living*, 2:88).

[72] Al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 54, 266–269; Meri, *The Cult*, 53, 86.

[73] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3:338, 342.

[74] Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, 3: 328–329, 346.

[75] Under the threat of the approaching Second Crusade (543/1148) the *muṣḥaf* was brought out into the middle of the *jāmiʿ*, and men, women and children congregated around it with bare heads, and prayed to God (Meri, *The Cult*, 115). For two similar later occasions, see *ibid*., 116; and Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 13:294–295.

APPENDIX II: DYNASTIC TABLES AND MAPS

The Zangids in Mosul and Aleppo[76]

521/1127 Zangī b. Qasīm al-Dawla Āq Sunqur, ʿImād al-Dīn
541/1146 Ghāzī I b. Zangī I, Sayf al-Dīn
544/1149 Mawdūd b. Zangī I, Quṭb al-Dīn
565/1170 Ghāzī II b. Mawdūd, Sayf al-Dīn
576/1180 Masʿūd I b. Mawdūd, ʿIzz al-Dīn
589/1193 Arslān Shāh I b. Masʿūd, Abū al-Ḥārith Nūr al-Din
607/1211 Masʿūd II b. Arslān Shāh, al-Malik al-Qāhir ʿIzz al-Dīn
615/1218 Arslan Shāh II b. Masʿūd II, Nūr al-Dīn
616/1219 Maḥmūd b. Masʿūd II, al-Malik al-Qāhir ʿIzz al-Dīn
631/1234 Rule in Mosul by the vizier Badr al-Dīn Luʾluʾ

The Zangids in Damascus and then Aleppo

541/1147 Maḥmūd b. Zangī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Nūr al-Dīn, in Aleppo and then in Damascus
569–77/1174–81 Ismāʿīl b. Maḥmūd, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Nūr al-Dīn
577/1181 Zangī II b. Mawdūd, Abū al-Fatḥ al-Malik al-ʿĀdil ʿImād al-Dīn, of Sanjar
579/1183 Conquest by the Ayyūbid Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf (Saladin)

The Ayyūbids in Egypt

564/1169 al-Malik al-Nāṣir I Yūsuf b. Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb b. Shādhī, Abū al-Muẓaffar Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin)
589/1193 al-Malik al-ʿAzīz I ʿUthmān b. al-Nāṣir I Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf, Abū al-Fatḥ ʿImād al-Dīn
595/1198 al-Malik al-Manṣūr Muḥammad b. al-Aẓīz ʿImād al-Dīn ʿUthmān, Nāṣir al-Dīn

[76] Reproduced, with permission, from Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*. For the lines of the minor principalities, see *ibid*.

596/1200 al-Malik al-ʿĀdil I Muḥammad or Aḥmad b. Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, Abū Bakr Sayf al-Dīn of Damascus
615/1218 al-Malik al-Kāmil I Muḥammad b. al-ʿĀdil I, Abū al-Maʿālī Naṣir al-Dīn of Damascus
635/1238 al-Malik al-ʿĀdil II Abū Bakr b. al-Kāmil Muḥammad, Sayf al-Dīn, of Damascus (d. 645/1248)
637/1240 al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ II Ayyūb b. al-Kāmil Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn of Damascus
647/1249 al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh b. Yūsuf Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn II b. Muḥammad Ghiyāth al-Dīn, of Damascus
648–50/1250–2 al-Malik al-Ashraf II Mūsā b. al-Masʿūd Yūsuf Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn b. al-Kāmil Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn, Muẓaffar al-Dīn
650/1252 power siezed by the Mamlūk Aybak, but with al-Malik al-Ashraf II's name retained in the *khuṭba* until 652/1254

The Ayyūbids in Damascus

582/1186 al-Malik al-Afḍal ʿAlī b. al-Nāṣir Yūsuf Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Abū al-Ṣasan Nūr al-Dīn
592/1196 al-Malik al-ʿĀdil I Muḥammad or Aḥmad b. Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, Abū Bakr Sayf al-Dīn, of Egypt and Aleppo
597–615/1201–18 al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā b. al-ʿĀdil I, Sharaf al-Dīn, as governor
615 /1218 al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā
624/1227 al-Malik al-Nāṣir II Dāwūd b. al-Muʿaẓẓam ʿĪsā, Salāḥ al-Dīn
626/1229 al-Malik al-Ashraf I Mūsā b. al-ʿĀdil II, Abū al-Fatḥ Muẓaffar al-Dīn, of Diyār Bakr
635/1237 al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ I Ismāʿīl b. al-ʿĀdil II, ʿImād al-Dīn, first reign
635/1238 al-Malik al-Kāmil I Muḥammad b. al-ʿĀdil I Muḥammad, Abū al-Maʿālī Nāṣir al-Dīn
635/1238 al-Malik al-ʿĀdil II Abū Bakr b. al-Kāmil Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn
636/1239 al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ II Ayyūb b. al-Kāmil Muḥammad, Najm al-Dīn, first reign
637/1239 al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ I Ismāʿīl, ʿImād al-Dīn, second reign
643/1245 al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ II Ayyūb of Egypt, second reign
647/1249 al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam Tūrān Shāh b. al-Ṣāliḥ II Ayyūb, Ghiyāth al-Din, together with Egypt

648–658/1250–60 al-Malik al-Nāṣir II Yūsuf b. al-ʿAzīz Muḥammad Ghiyāth al-Dīn, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, of Aleppo

658/1260 Temporary Mongol conquest, followed by the the rule of the Mamlūk Baybars

The Ayyūbids in Aleppo

579/1183 al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī b. al-Nāṣir I Yūsuf Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Ghiyāth al-Dīn I, as governor for his father

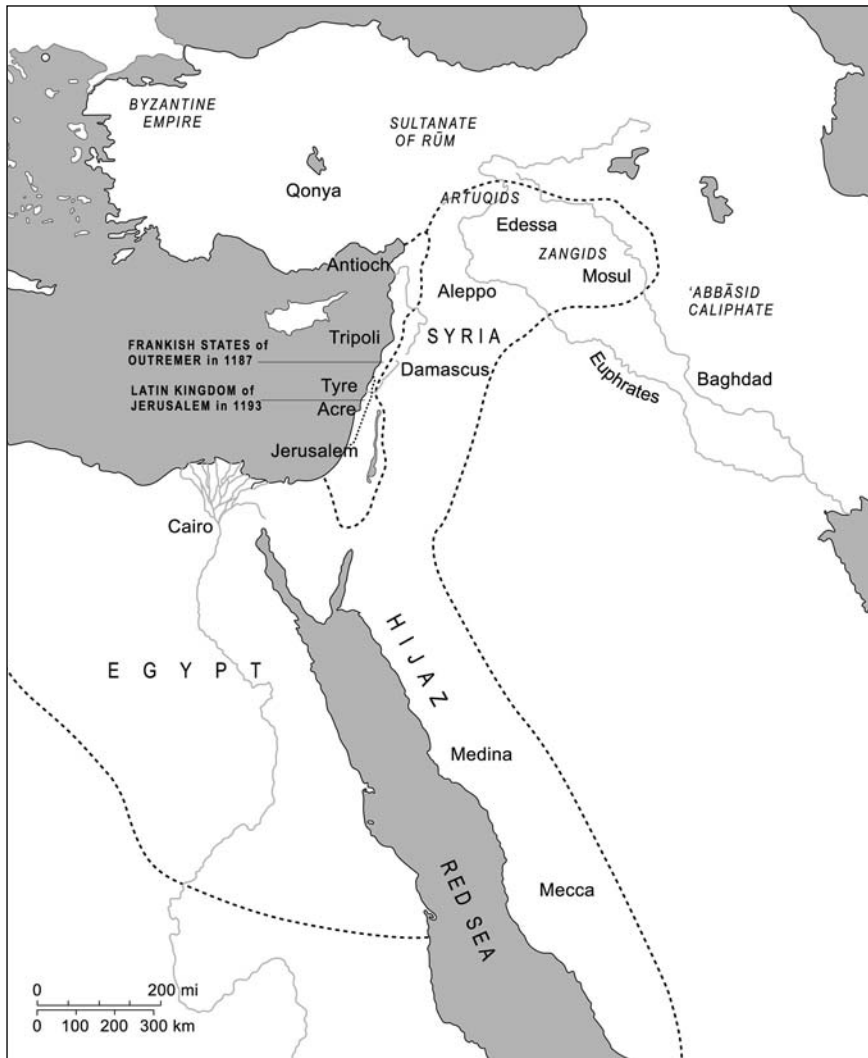
579/1183 al-Malik al-ʿĀdil I Muḥammad or Aḥmad b. Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, Abū Bakr Sayf al-Dīn

582/1186 al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī b. al-Nāṣir I Yūsuf Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Ghiyāth al-Dīn I

613/1216 al-Malik al-ʿAzīz Muḥammad b. al-Ẓāhir Ghāzī, Ghiyāth al-Dīn II

634–40/1236–1242 regency of Ḍayfa Khātūn bint al-Malik al-ʿĀdil I

634–58/1236–60 al-Malik al-Nāṣir II Yūsuf b. al-ʿAzīz Muḥammad Ghiyāth al-Dīn II, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn

658/1260 Mongol and then Mamlūk conquests

Adapted from The Crusades: *An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara: ABC Clio 2006, 1:124, with permission.

Map I: The Ayyūbid State in 583/1187 and 589/1193 (adapted by Dror Heller from: *The Crusades: An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara 2006, 1:124. Copyright © 2006 ABC-CLIO, Inc. Reprinted with permission).

Map II: Settlements of *Bilād al-Shām* in the Thirteenth Century (adapted by Dror Heller from L. Korn, *Ayyūbidische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien*, Heidelberg 2004, 1:92, with the permission of the author).

Map III: Damascus and its Surroundings in the Thirteenth Century (adapted by Ronni Bluestein from M. Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus 1190–1350*, Cambridge 1994, map 1, with the permission of the author and Cambridge University Press; and from Korn, *Ayyūbidische Architektur*, 1:110 and 1:114, with the permission of the author).

Map IV: Aleppo in the Thirteenth Century (adapted by Ronni Bluestein from Y. Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo*, University Park PA 1997, figure 4, with the permission of the author and the University of Pennsylvania Press; and from Korn, *Ayyūbidische Architektur*, 1:120, with the permission of the author).

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